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THE NEW YORKER

MAR. 7, 2005

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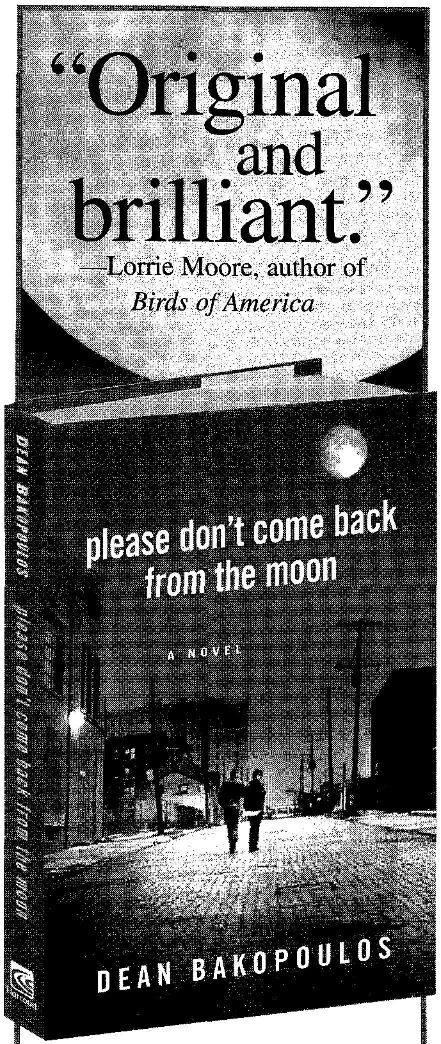
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THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 7, 2005

6 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
27 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
The gonzo life; Canseco the Chemist.

Orhan Pamuk 34 PERSONAL HISTORY
The Pamuk Apartments
A childhood in Istanbul.
Jeffrey Toobin 42 THE POLITICAL SCENE
Blowing Up the Senate
Extreme tactics in the fight to confirm judges.
Steve Martin 47 SHOUTS & MURMURS
C.I.A. Unveils Old bin Laden Tape
Ken Auletta 48 ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS
Sign-Off
An unquiet end to Dan Rather's long career.
Umberto Eco 62 FICTION
"The Gorge"

THE CRITICS
BOOKS

Adam Gopnik 74 *Voltaire's horror.*
81 Briefly Noted
Nancy Franklin 82 ON TELEVISION
"Medium," "Supernanny."
Peter Schjeldahl 84 THE ART WORLD
Cy Twombly at the Whitney.
Sasha Frere-Jones 86 POP MUSIC
The art of the ringtone.
David Denby 88 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Be Cool," "Constantine."

POEMS

Charles Simic 39 "On the Farm"
John Updike 66 "Saguaros"

COVER *"Unaffordable Eden," by Marcellus Hall* THE BACK PAGE *"Further Proof That Lincoln Was Gay," by Paul Rudnick* DRAWINGS *Alex Gregory, William Hamilton, Michael Crawford, Charles Barsotti, Mick Stevens, Lee Lorenz, Roz Chast, Tom Cheney, Barbara Smaller, Leo Cullum, Victoria Roberts, Danny Shanahan, Bruce Eric Kaplan, David Sipress, Drew Dernavich*

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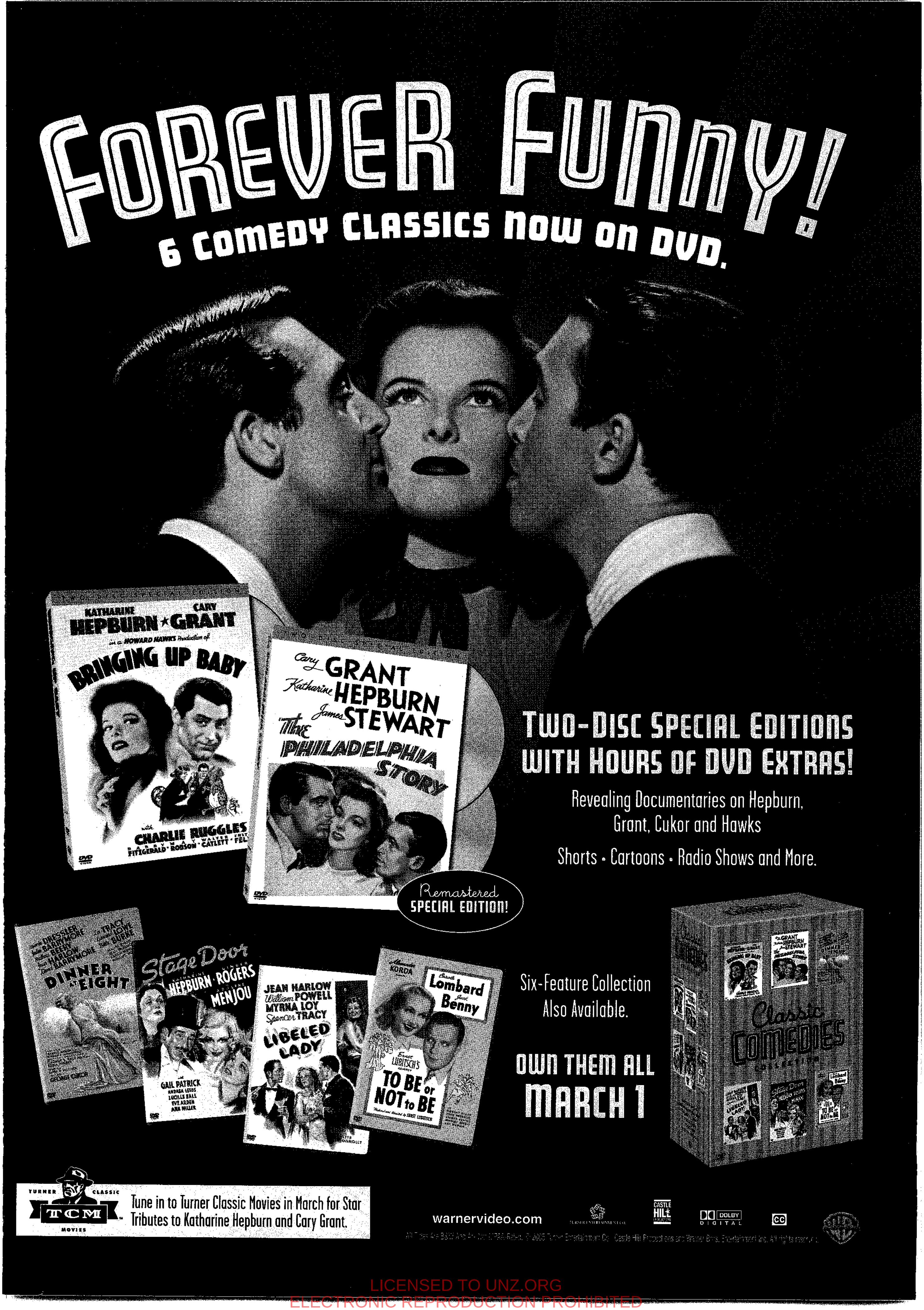

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Steve Martin (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 47) has recently completed the movie of his book "Shopgirl."

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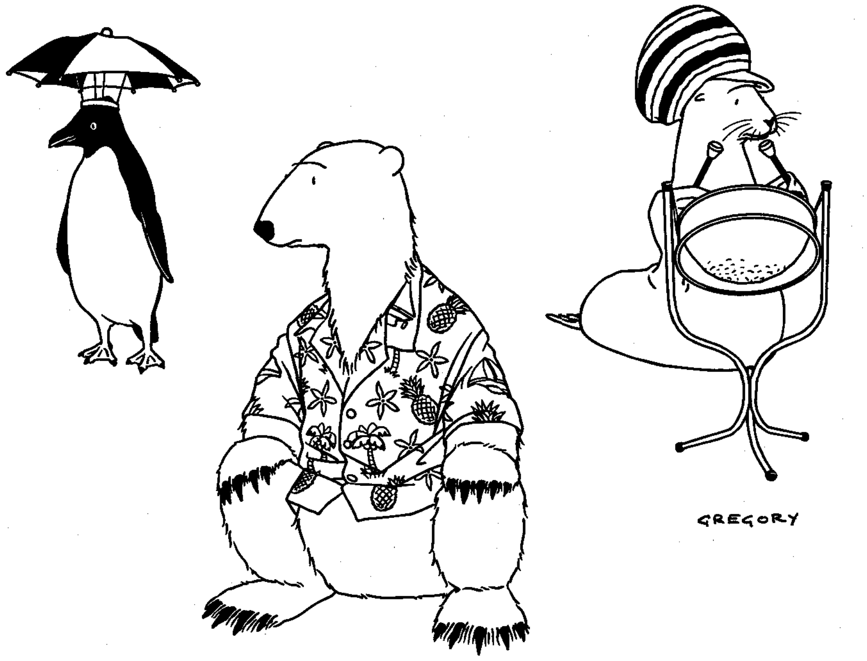
Paul Rudnick (The Back Page, p. 90) is a novelist and playwright. His most recent play, "Pride and Joy," was part of the Tribeca Theatre Festival. ♦

TELLTALE SIGNS OF GLOBAL WARMING



THE MAIL

BRAVE OLD WORLD

In his piece on the eugenicist Francis Galton, Jim Holt warns that genetic testing and manipulation of embryos may lead to "a 'GenRich' class of people who are smarter, healthier, and handsomer than the underclass of 'Naturals' " (Books, January 24th & 31st). But even without these technologies similar divisions already exist. Children whose parents can afford to send them to private schools and élite colleges end up smarter than their less privileged counterparts. Well-to-do adults are healthier because they have better medical care; they are made handsomer by spa treatments and designer clothing. If the class-based gap in intelligence, health, and beauty resulted from nature rather than nurture, these divergences would doubtless be even greater, but the situation, at least in outline, might seem familiar.

Laura C. Bornstein
Bryn Mawr, Pa.

MANUFACTURER'S LIABILITY

James Surowiecki suggests that juries are unrealistic in blaming manufacturers of potentially dangerous products, such as Vioxx, for failing to pull them from the market when some of the company's own analyses have indicated that risks to users might outweigh the benefits (The Financial Page, January 24th & 31st). No doubt it is a good thing, as he says, for manufacturers to encourage internal debates weighing their products' risks and benefits. But too often these findings remain hidden from consumers until they are forced into public view by product-liability suits. What is needed is corporate transparency that guarantees adequate public disclosure of hazards when a new product hits the market.

Ben Kelley
Boston, Mass.

Surowiecki draws attention to the strange fact that juries may penalize companies that research the potential dangers of their products more than they penalize those that fail to do adequate research in the first place. Perhaps one reason is what seems to me a significant shift in judicial policy in the last few years. Where, once, judges were generally discouraged from dismissing a case, even when the plaintiff-consumer had only a slim chance of success, there is, increasingly, a burden on the plaintiff to prove a company's failure to heed warnings in the documents submitted to the judge before a trial. Without a paper trail from the outset, a case may never reach a jury. Unsurprisingly, lawyers who specialize in these complex and costly cases may not take cases where the corporation's own documents do not clearly establish its failure to heed warnings, leaving them to less experienced attorneys with more limited resources.

Paul L. Mills
Los Angeles, Calif.

STATE OF THE BLOCKBUSTER

The blockbuster's dominance in the Hollywood landscape described by Louis Menand makes a certain kind of sense (A Critic at Large, February 7th). A big special-effects extravaganza is arguably the only type of film for which there are no substitutes or counterparts in television, books, or theatre. Moreover, in many other film genres one doesn't lose much by waiting for the movie to come out on video. But if one wants to see "Independence Day" at all, there is no choice but the local megaplex. It is natural that the studios focus their efforts where there is the least competition.

Michael Mitton
Emeryville, Calif.

CORRECTION: In "The Misfit," by Mark Singer (February 14th & 21st), Jody Worth, a writer on the HBO show "Deadwood," was misidentified as Jody Welch.

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WRONG ABOUT JAPAN

"In this plangent & sweet memoir, the two-time Booker Prize winner **Peter Carey** expands his cultural horizon and deepens his bond with his son as they explore Japanese anime and manga together in Tokyo."
–Minneapolis Star Tribune

"An entertaining and uplifting book ...The mysteries of Japan and father-son relationships prove to be rich subjects, especially for **a writer at the peak of his powers."**
–Sunday Times, U.K.

"Never less than charming...Encounters between the author and one of the more baffling cultures of our time...the world of the teenager."
–N.Y. Times Book Review

"Curious & affecting ...emotionally huge"
–Denver Post

"Humorous & touching ...The beauty of this writing is in its openness and wit...its sense of adventure."
–New Statesman U.K.

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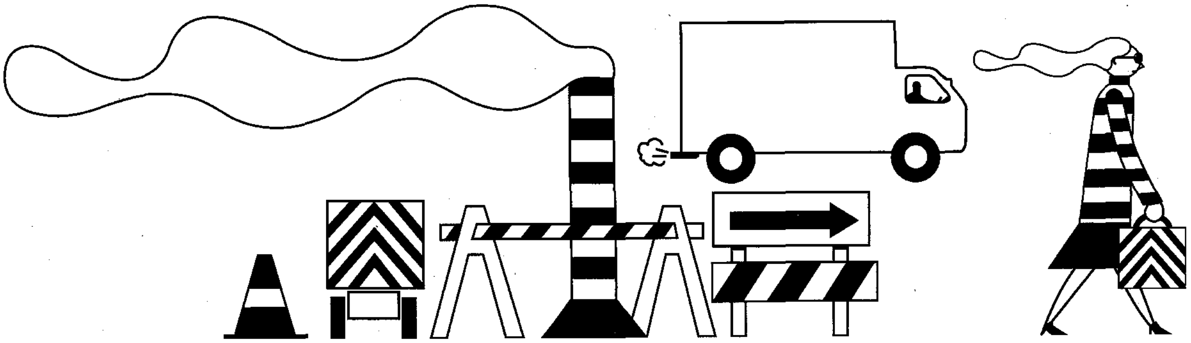
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



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			2	3	4	5
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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

SEMI-FAMOUS AMOS

Amos Lee, a twenty-seven-year-old Philadelphia native with scruffy locks and carefully groomed facial hair, looks like many a singer-songwriter who has come before him. But his professional background (he was a schoolteacher before he became a musician) and personal tastes (his favorite artists include the early-seventies soul great Bill Withers) set him apart from similar artists. He's done his time in such Lower East Side venues as the Living Room, and his songwriting attracted the attention of the Blue Note label, which has just issued his self-titled début record. To celebrate the album's release, Lee is playing a set of shows at the Bitter End, Joe's Pub, and the Living Room, after which he'll open for Bob Dylan on the legend's spring tour. (See Night Life.)

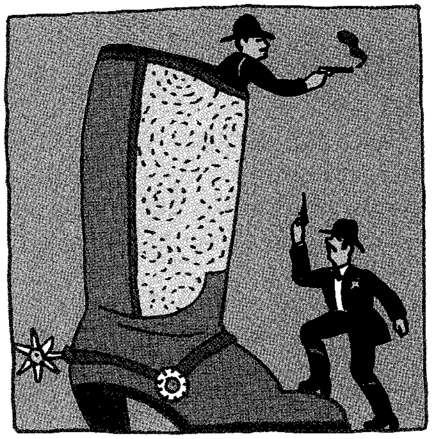
BEST WESTERNS

As a genre, the Western has undergone more analysis than the Upper West Side, so much so that it's easy to forget the simple pleasures of the films. This week, Film Forum presents the essentials, beginning with the John Ford/John Wayne collaboration "The Searchers" and ending with the so-called revisionist Westerns of the nineteen-sixties. Along the way, the series takes a closer look at cult figures such as Budd Boetticher and Tom Mix. (Starts March 4; see Movies.)

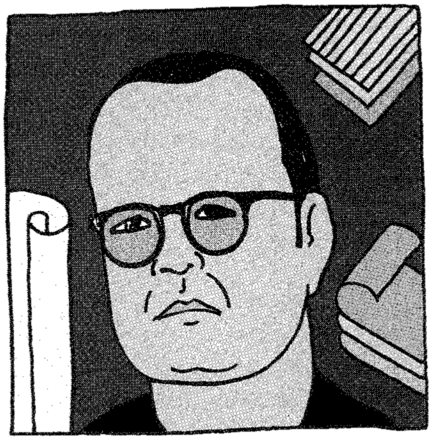
IT'S ONLY A PAPER WORLD

The German artist Thomas Demand offers crisp photographs of cut-and-glued, life-sized mockups of unpeopled environments; they may be generic (copy shop, bathroom) or historically fraught (idealistic postwar German architecture, the kitchen of a Saddam Hussein hideout). The effect is less fool-the-eye than haunt-the-mind; Demand's delicate, austere, somehow heavyhearted labors balance aesthetic wonderment with philosophical pessimism. He suggests that, like photographs, our assumptions about reality are paper thin. (Museum of Modern Art, opens March 4; see Art.)

The folk-soul singer Amos Lee performs a series of shows.



A retrospective of classic Westerns, at Film Forum.



The work of the German artist Thomas Demand, at MOMA.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

Shade canopy accessories Barrier strips Chalkboards Therapeutic ultrasound PIN photo diode modules Medical monitoring services Check valves Resin systems Chemical oxygen generators All-in-one touch computers Charting cable ships Elastic bandages Wireless systems Chillers Semiconductor heat sinks Digital audio services Automotive module relays Surface mounted cabinets Rotary switches Flame retardants Pressure seal closures Electric portable air compressors Circuit breakers Automotive quality inspection equipment Solid-state components Gas discharge tube replacements Components for camcorders Panel indicators Firefighter breathing systems Heat isolation devices Climate monitoring Hazardous material protective suits Solid-state subsystems Signal magnetics Passive electronics Medical oxygen delivery Grounding connectors Telescoping sign support systems Broadband driver amplifiers Champagne glasses Drinking bottles Polymeric and porcelain surge arrestors for distribution and transmission networks Automotive power relays Garment hangers Microcoaxial assemblies Snack food packaging Aircraft wire and power cables Modem cable assemblies Industrial control switches Continuous-slot metal framing Landfill development Multi-mode radar Patch cable assemblies Shielded and coaxial cable slices Wine glasses Flame-retardant tape Range hoods Halogen-free cables for commercial and offshore applications Absorbable monofilament sutures Cable TV converters Terminals and connectors for underground networks Syringe dispensers Cordless telephone batteries Fire protection systems Tubing for outdoor furniture framing Sensor wraps Easels PIN diodes High-performance solid state relays and power controllers Wire harness tape Ceramic burners Electrical equipment for saunas Cylindrical control connectors Terminals and splices Security systems Relay sockets and accessories Arson detection Galvanized steel tubing Paperboard Counters and timers Sealed connectors Databus assemblies Television sets DC converters Subcutaneous sensors Pipe and tube products Electrical tape High pass filter inductors Pistol grip hand tool systems for IDCs Adhesive tape Segmentally welded pipe fittings USB cables Construction management Deactivators International mains adaptors Suction instruments Test equipment Steel box connectors Calibration equipment and services Plastic tumblers Cable trays Verified audio detection Thermoplastic piping systems Coaxial cable terminators Pigtail cable assemblies Waveguides Plastics engineering Institutional timekeeping Photocopiers Cabled and blind-mate power connectors High-performance connectors Safety relief valves Access floor modules Halogen-free wire Power systems Raised face flanges Connectors for high-voltage substations Flexible non-metallic conduit Reduced wall flexible metal conduit Catheters Medication nebulizers Digital metering systems Wiring harness sockets Automobile steering columns Pediatric monitoring equipment Cable design conductors Flame-retardant tubing for nuclear environments Roof[illegible]ways Digital products Air sampling equipment Voltage wheels Customized point-of-sale receipts Digital proofing Power tool switches Chokes Medical diagnostics Sound [illegible]affic control equipment Digital visual interface products Vertical drain membranes and radiant barriers Cabinet power systems Wall track systems DIP switches Resi[illegible]ermostats Electrical transformers High-performance RF/microwave antennas Lighting for public services Video cables Thermal circuit breakers Video endoscop[illegible]rigation pipe Heat-tracing connectors Potassium bicarbonate-based extinguishing agents Megaphone components Calculators Institutional can liners [illegible] Wafer gear Varactors Coaxial cables Patient monitoring cables Drop cloths Alarms for hazardous areas Power splitters Chassis components Stormwa[illegible]ard readers with web-based authentication Printer cable assemblies Engineering services Amusement machine components Disposable manual resusc[illegible] gas installations Patch panels Airport lighting systems Soldering equipment Long-haul, transoceanic cable systems Entry modules Microsurgical [illegible]ng harness design software Automotive components Computer-assisted design services Porcelain disc insulators Flex and rigid circuits Diagnostic [illegible] Diagnostic and stress testing Landscape plastic sheeting Rechargeable car flashlights Memory card receptacles Spirometry systems Water treatment facilities Coat[illegible] backed building and construction tapes Power magnetics Exhausters Ultraviolet disinfection systems Moisture analysis equipment Flange gaskets with both elasto[illegible] alloys Professional fire department hardware Custom sterilizable cable assemblies Skin effect trace systems Dental dressings and sutures Parts for lawn and garden [illegible] Tape measures Flame detectors Ribbon cables Carpet backing Parallel groove clamps Graphic arts tape Extended coverage fire sprinkler heads [illegible] pumps [illegible] monitoring Satellite radio and digital audio systems Jacket compounds Galvanized steel armor with PVC jackets Irrigation pumps Utility cabinets Cyanoacrylate [illegible] adhesives Large-screen video projectors Eye pads Arterial extension sets Paper mill wraps Fence framework Distribution panels Continuous timers Protective breathing equip[illegible] Special purpose spiral antennas Automatic pick, place and press Power toggle switches Fiber-optic connectors Veterinary medical products Bypass valves Carbon dio[illegible] transmitters Specialty chemicals Rainfall gauges Alarms for motor vehicles Water sampling and analysis Fingerprint identification Mobile security systems Cable ties Firefig[illegible] flares Multiplier diodes Fireproof cables Drum core magnetics Audio receivers Flexible exhaust connectors Isolators and circulators Magnet wire termination machines Dual hybri[illegible] Static measuring equipment Hand-held radios Cable management accessories Steam-tracing products Extrusion laminating Parking deck PVC-jacketed metal clad cable Factory automation cables Steelwork fixings Airport construction management Instrument winterization Cotton balls Pipe for recreational equipment Self-adhesive cable clips Multi-pair high flexibility cables Fixed cable termination adapters Butterfly valves Portable memory Components for CD recorders and players Telemetry systems Audio production services Integrated molding/plating technology Telephone systems Safety goggles Reverse cutting sutures Decorative shields Temperature and pressure gauges Commercial-quality steel tubing Laser diodes Temperature sensors Connection droppers Dry-erase marker boards Feminine hygiene products Storage tanks Analgesics First aid kits Thermal controls Computer-assisted surgery Power modules Subminiature D connectors Front-connected sockets Digital attenuators Automated teller machine components Spring pin [illegible] probe assemblies Control panels Wet pipe sprinkler systems Alarm verification Security keypads Pain management products Helical gears Roadway and tunnel management systems Printed circuit terminals Galvanized round signposts Rocker and paddle switches Microwave components Roof and gutter heating cables Arson detection Voice ampli[illegible] Fall arrest systems High-voltage connectors Power entry modules Custom broadband networks Steel threadable sprinkler pipe Accounting software Ultrasound cable ass[illegible] Protective clothing for emergency workers Flare launchers Dry pipe systems Cable tie guns Broadband amplifiers Rectangular heavy-duty connectors Discharge devices Vi[illegible]ion dampers Electromagnetic flow readers Laser components Advanced composites Coaxial connectors Adhesive covers Flat steel plates Elastomeric connectors Passive fibe[illegible]tic hardware Singulation systems Electrosurgical devices Coffee service kits Automotive radar sensors Electrical metallic tubing compression connectors and cou[illegible]s Intercommunication devices Customized valves Dry pipe valves Flexible hoses Curing ovens Insulated ground metal clad cables Digital satellite radio antennas Perimeter do[illegible] window protection systems Anemometers Cosmetic surgery needles Flexible non-metallic conduit Supply cylind[illegible]m communication systems Identific[illegible] products Flexible piping equipment Rayon balls Dedicated fiber pair monitoring Hardened and tempered steel [illegible] in relays Interior mo[illegible] detectors Floor-mounted p[illegible] points Specialty electrodes Alcohol preps Fire sprinkler monitoring systems Thermochromic color-changing ink Food service plates Taper cutting sutures Carbon steels Fla[illegible] adaptors PVC conduit and fittings Button battery holder connectors Carbon monoxide protection Environmental data management [illegible] selector switches Biomet[illegible] Frequency response analyzers Thyristor surge protectors Substations Extinguishing powders Contactless position sensors Electrosurgical generators Hospital blankets Modu[illegible] and relays Terminal blocks Painter's plastic Industrial-grade trash bags Signal transducer cable harnesses DIN rail mount sockets Taper point sutures Sand filters Jacketed ca[illegible] Deep-sea cable installations Computer-printable cards Mechanical connectors Attic fire sprinklers Front end rectifiers for wireless applications Seals [illegible] Components for str[illegible] lighting Fuel dispensing systems Gaffers tape Arterial extension sets Pipe freeze thermal controls Infrastructure antennas Flanged channel posts Intelligent fuses Cardiac blanke[illegible] Battery connection cable assemblies Free-height connectors Power relays Custom-printed retail shelf labels Medical packaging Digital signage Sheet metal fabrication Oxyg[illegible] therapy products Extension cables Liquid bandages Very high-density cable interconnection assemblies Liquid chromatography systems Self-adhesive cable clips Extrusion hea[illegible] sinks Facility management Lithium batteries Hazardous chemical spill control Vandal-proof photocontrol systems HDTV antennas Inflatable [illegible] Pharmaceuticals LNA amplifiers Resettable devices Distribution compression connectors Specialty polymers Pre-amplifiers Electromechanical relays Cathodic protection Input/output [illegible]able assemblies Electrical conduit Videocassette recorder components Disinfectants Filtered modular jacks Hydrologic and hydrographic services General purpose valves P[illegible] harsh environment connectors Recycling collection bins Surgical catheters Floor fixings Semiconductor switches Custom heat sinks Delineator posts Medical and surgical sponges Signature capture devices Coplanar connectors Terminal clamps Reversible hydraulic power packs Structural steel tubing for greenhouses Rheostats Germicidal ultraviolet lamps Biomedical engineering Hydraulic controls Aluminum auto parts Composite station post insulators Codeine phosphate Heavy duty starter/battery lugs and connectors Scan converters Couplers Thermal grease Helical rotor pumps Sirens Battery interconnection systems for portable electronics Light rail transportation design and [illegible]eering Automotive semiconductor and magnetic sensors Custom-printed theatrical admission tickets Medical fluid warming systems Ratcheted crimp tools Insp[illegible] microscopes Medical temperature management Power supply distribution units Satellite cables Video endoscopy Digital transmitters Automatic sensors Greenhouse cover[illegible] Signal PC board relays Microribbon connectors Abrasives Decontamination management services Flocculators Aircraft hangars Spacers and dampers Finite element analysis [illegible] purpose contactors Wire and cable identification systems Environmental remediation Markers Fire detection systems Aerospace engine parts Cassette recorders GPS receivers High-freque[illegible] connectors Printed circuit boards Wire wrap Extractors Residential concealed fire sprinklers Customized chemicals Telecommunications Frequency synthesizers Precision time clocks Benchtop cut-and-strip machines High-power pulsed laser diodes De-icing thermal controls Flexible steel conduit Steel lugs Energy management consulting Roadway and tunnel construction management Battery terminals Surface skimmers World's largest producer of acetaminophen Interactive video surveillance systems Memory socket[illegible]e-delay relays and sensors Floor plates Laser-engraved markers Water motor alarms Multipurpose filters for emission control in high-noise industrial environments Swit[illegible]ard wire identification materials Brake master cylinders Insulated lunch bags Plug valves Capacitors Institutional voice evacuation systems Twisted-pair cables Gaseous clea[illegible]ents Undersea fiber-optic telecommunications Components for DVD players Special hazard protection products Electrosurgical pencils Special shelving and partitions Holiday [illegible]ting controls Pneumatic cylinders for aluminum smelting Cartridge heaters Electronic article surveillance systems Integrated antenna systems Power transistors GPS com[illegible]ents Components for home entertainment systems Deluge valves and accessories Perforated telescopic steel tubing Cathode ray tubes Theft, fire, and access control security systems Product disinfection Grating systems Current differential protective relays Scalpels Flood warning systems Computer-printable labels Hose racks Blind-mate hot plugs Antimicrobial dispensers Ruggedized transmitter/receiver modules Safety glasses Composite tension insulators Power cable assemblies for electrosurgical devices Aluminum condu[illegible] Skin care products Barricade support legs Electrostatic testing and coating Alkaline batteries Hospital communication systems Cable cutters Video monitors Amplitude/phase tracking DF antennas Digital indicators Steelwork connection products Rail de-icing systems Hot-rolled steel coils Combustible gas leak detectors Fiberglass support systems and fasteners Shingle and roof underlayments Pitchers Backup power during blackouts Residential and commercial awning framework Aircraft power systems Transmission line arrestors Edge emitting LEDs Gigabit cables Hypodermic syringes Epoxies Firefighting axes Ultrasonic surgical systems Clean room equipment Ice cream sealing wraps Flex film systems Space-qualified components Airport runways and terminals Overvoltage protective relays Identification labeling Water treatment for irrigation Switch mode pow[illegible]etics Supermarket packaging Actuation products Premises cabling Attic fire sprinklers High-speed radio frequency circuits Induction loop amplifiers Liquid crystal disp[illegible] pipe Lasers Bonded heatsink assemblies Patchcords Heat detectors Resin-reinforced fiberglass tubing Custom power magnetics Electronic chemicals Delineator posts Si[illegible] heat shrink tubing Air filtration Digital video management systems Food bags Surface wave touchscreens Bacteria filters Dry pipe fire sprinkler valves Wash presses Lightning [illegible]ctors High-power transistor modules [illegible] and silver pastes Flat face flanges Geotextiles Laser-based sensors Insulation jackets Recording charts and markers Steel [illegible] for automotive components and [illegible] Welding branch outlets Composite wire Gaskets Automotive twin pack relays Multi-conductor network cables Travel mugs Boiler t[illegible] Mobile phone interconnections Spark suppressor housings Coated fabrics Forestry tools GPS antennas Internal storage interconnects Reprographics Electrical meta[illegible] Telecom and signal relays Weatherpr[illegible] Portable oxygen units Intrusion alarm detection devices Lighting cable Floodlights for high-security areas Intuitive ala[illegible] Modulators Joysticks Barricade tapes Counters and timers Electronic crowd controlling queue systems Fire hose reel cabinets Keypads Double and quad-ridge wavegu[illegible] Laboratory benches Aerospace ground power and industrial high-performance contactors Extreme temperature flexible metal conduit High speed RF modules Circuit [illegible] devices Heavy-duty commercial applicators IF amplifiers Automobile battery disconnect switch relays Lecterns and podiums Fabric maintenance Harness adapters Low [illegible]

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ALL SHOOK UP
The spirit of Elvis lives on in a new musical comedy set to his songs, with a book by Joe DiPietro, musical direction and arrangements by Stephen Oremus, and choreography by Ken Roberson. Directed by Christopher Ashley. In previews. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DESSA ROSE
Sherley Anne Williams's novel about an antebellum-era friendship between a runaway slave (LaChanze) and an abandoned wife (Rachel York) has become a musical, with book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and music by Stephen Flaherty. Choreographed and directed by Graciela Daniele. In previews. (Mitzi Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS
John Lithgow, Norbert Leo Butz, and Sherie Rene Scott star in a musical based on the Steve Martin and Michael Caine film about con men. Created by David Yazbek (music and lyrics), Jeffrey Lane (book), and Jerry Mitchell (choreography). Directed by Jack O'Brien. In previews. Opens March 3 at 6:30. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

GHETTO SUPERSTAR (THE MAN THAT I AM)
Billy Porter's musical memoir describes his life as a gay black man and a performer. Directed by Brad Rouse. In previews. Opens March 6 at 7. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE
Jessica Lange and Christian Slater star in a revival of Tennessee Williams's 1945 drama. Directed by David Leveaux. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAS ISCARIOT
A new drama by Stephen Adly Guirgis ("Our Lady of 121st Street," "Jesus Hopped the A Train"), set in a quasi-modern courtroom in Purgatory, wrestles with the question of divine justice. With Eric Bogosian as Satan and Sam Rockwell as Judas. Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. Opens March 2 at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

SPAMALOT
The Monty Python musical stars David Hyde Pierce, Tim Curry, and Hank Azaria. With a book by Eric Idle and music and lyrics by Idle and John Du Prez. Directed by Mike Nichols. In previews. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

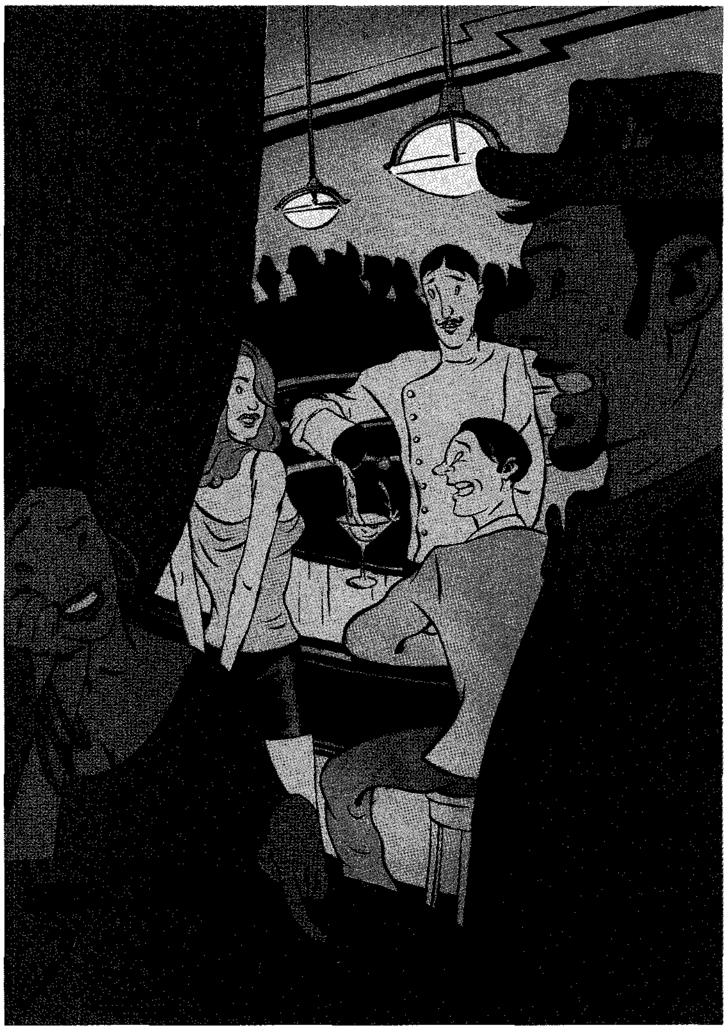
A VERY NAUGHTY GREEK PLAY
A saucy adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy "The Wasps," about a father who works for a hedonistic, power-crazed demagogue and his son's attempts to reawaken his conscience. A production of the Aquila Theatre Company. Translated by Peter Meineck. In previews. Opens March 5 at 8. (Baruch Performing Arts Center. E. 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS
Mercedes Ruehl stars in the première of a play by Lanie Robertson about the life and loves of the art patron and tastemaker Peggy Guggenheim. Directed by Casey Childs. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AFTER ASHLEY
A troubled teen (Kieran Culkin) becomes a national celebrity, in a new play by Gina Gionfriddo that skewers the media's glorification of tragedy. Anna Paquin costars. Directed by Terry Kinney. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

ALL WEAR BOWLERS
Geoff Sobelle, of Pig Iron Theatre Company, and Trey Lyford, of the Civilians, join forces in this existential physical comedy about silent-film clowns who fall out of the screen and find themselves stuck in a live clown act. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. Through March 12.)



A fortune-teller greets patrons of Employees Only (see Night Life).

ZOHAR LAZAR

ALTAR BOYZ
A musical comedy about a Christian boy band has songs like "Girl, You Make Me Wanna Wait" and "Jesus Called Me on My Cell Phone." Conceived by Marc Kessler and Ken Davenport, with a score by Gary Adler and Michael Patrick Walker and a book by Kevin Del Aguila. Directed by Stafford Arima. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

BROOKLYN BOY
In Donald Margulies's new play, Eric (Adam Arkin), a young literary lion, interrupts his book tour to visit his dying father, Manny (the baleful Allan Miller), in the cancer ward of a Brooklyn hospital. Manny isn't big on reading; he is, however, big on belittling. Learning that his son's book is No. 11 on the *Times* best-seller list, Manny says, "You mean there *is* an eleven? I thought it only went to ten." Margulies's portrait of envy's spoiling rage is served up with large dollops of humor and a pinch of reparation. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/14 & 21/05.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONTROVERSY OF VALLADOLID
A new work by the French playwright Jean-Claude Carrière explores the debate in the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century on the question of whether the indigenous peoples of the Americas were human. Translated by Richard Nelson. Directed by David Jones. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Through March 20.)

CORIOLANUS
Karin Coonrod directs Theatre for a New Audience's production of Shakespeare's tale about a class-divided society, set in Rome in wartime. With Christian Camargo, Roberta Maxwell, and Teagle F. Bougere. (John Jay College Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-279-4200. Through March 6.)

THE END OF THE MOON
This solo work by Laurie Anderson, inspired by her artist residency at NASA, is set to an original violin-and-electronics score. Lighting by Jennifer Tipton and sound by Jody Elff. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-646-4100.)

HAPPY DAYS
The comic actor Lea DeLaria could have been credible as Winnie, the most fully realized and emotionally accessible of all the characters that Beckett created at the start of the nineteen-sixties. She has an expressive face, and she takes great delight in performing. But she didn't have a chance of finding the role in the Worth Street Theatre Company's production at the Classic Stage Company, with the show's director, Jeff Cohen, pushing her to play up those aspects of the script that suit her own personality rather than pursuing Beckett's idea of the character. Using countless accents, Cohen and DeLaria's Winnie amounts to a seminar on American comedy styles, ranging from the Chitlin Circuit to Minsky's. (2/28/05) (136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200. Through March 13.)

HOUSE/LIGHTS
The Wooster Group, on its thirtieth anniversary, revives its highly acclaimed 1999 show, which combines Gertrude Stein's "Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights" and Joseph Mawra's nineteen-sixties B movie, "Olga's House of Shame." Kate Valk leads the cast. Directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

HURLYBURLY
Written in 1984 and well revived by the New Group's deft, high-octane cast (which includes Ethan Hawke and Bobby Cannavale), David Rabe's play is a wild, daring, mysterious brainstorm that channels the horror and hilarity of the chaotic household of two debauched TV casting directors in the Hollywood Hills. Directed by Scott Elliott. (2/14 & 21/05) (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MC REELE
Punditry is the real subject of a topical new drama by Stephen Belber ("Tape"), about a handsome convict, Darius (Anthony Mackie), who enlists a sympathetic reporter (Michael O'Keefe) and his girlfriend, a television-talk-show host (Jodi Long), to help get his death sentence lifted. Not only do they succeed, they launch his political career. The drama, though savvy, feels contrived, and Mackie conveys Darius's cleverness and gift for spin but doesn't pull off the seductive ambiguity that the role requires. A Roundabout Theatre Company production. Directed by Doug Hughes ("Doubt"). (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

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THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS: THE MUSICAL!
An exuberant sendup of the genre, written by Eric Rockwell and Joanne Bogart, with music by Rockwell and lyrics by Bogart. Directed by Pamela Hunt. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

ON THE MOUNTAIN
Christopher Shinn's well-plotted new drama has surprising nuance and sudden surges of emotion. A tense but sexy single mother (Amy Ryan), raising a gifted, troubled teen-age daughter (Alison Pill), begins a relationship with a laid-back younger guy (Ebon Moss-Bachrach), who may or may not love her but definitely worships her former lover, a Seattle rock legend who committed suicide. The play offers several outstanding monologues, some tender, some searing, and one—a description of a short story by the daughter—unforgettable. The dialogues aren't as effective, in part because the characters guard their privacy so fiercely that their capacity for genuine interaction is limited; they are people who want to share but don't know how. Directed by Jo Bonney. (Playwrights Horizons Mainstage, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

PENTECOST
In the inaugural production at the Barrow Group Arts Center, art historians in a church in Europe come upon an apparent Old Master painting and disagree on its authenticity. When they learn it was painted by an Arab, not a European, their debate deepens. Written by David Edgar. Directed by Seth Barrish. (312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

ROMANCE
The Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new play by David Mamet (the company's co-founder), a courtroom comedy set in the present day. With Larry Bryggman and Bob Balaban. Directed by Neil Pepe. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

SHOCKHEADED PETER
A nightmarish and beautiful production. Actors in Victorian dress act out children's cautionary tales, stage-managed by a nervous, hysteric m.c. (the sinister, corroded Julian Bleach) with the help of the spooky Tiger Lillies, who accompany (and sometimes narrate) the proceedings with eerie, plangent music. (Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)
James Urbaniak gives a bravura performance as the title character in this delicately scripted monologue by Will Eno, about a man troubled by thought, or rather, by the thoughts that become particularly troubling once you've suffered a breakup, which Thom Pain has. No amount of intellectualizing can distract him from the memory of his beloved's legs, face, and eyes. Thom's language breaks down as he recalls the essentially nonverbal memory of flesh on flesh. Ably directed by Hal Brooks. (2/28/05) (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
The wracking tension of spelling-bee competition is turned into rollicking ironic fun in this new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin, in which each speller hams up the role of a different grade-school stereotype. Directed by James Lapine. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

ALSO PLAYING

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BELFAST BLUES
Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.

BOOZY
Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 22-868-4444. (Through March 5.)

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW
St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-868-4444. (Through March 6.)

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DEMOCRACY
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

THE GODS ARE POUNDING MY HEAD!
St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

JABU
Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

NINE PARTS OF DESIRE
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

700 SUNDAYS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.

TWELVE ANGRY MEN
American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

DANCE

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY
The troupe celebrates its fiftieth anniversary at City Center with a greatest-hits program of seventeen classics and two new works: the knotty ritual "Dante Variations" and the rueful-sweet hoedown "Klezmerbluegrass." ♦ March 1 at 7: "Esplanade," "Syzygy," and "Klezmerbluegrass." ♦ March 2 at 8: "Company B," "Eventide," and "Promethean Fire." ♦ March 3 at 8: "Cloven Kingdom," "Eventide," and "Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)." ♦ March 4 at 8: "Aureole," "3 Epitaphs," "Dante Variations," and "Company B." ♦ March 5 at 2: "Funny Papers," "Klezmerbluegrass," and "Promethean Fire." ♦ March 5 at 8: "Black Tuesday," "Klezmerbluegrass," and "Esplanade." ♦ March 6 at 3: "Company B," "Eventide," and "Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)." ♦ March 8 at 7: "Musical Offering," "Funny Papers," and "Piazzolla Caldera." (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through March 20.)

DANCEBRAZIL
The mid-century photos of Bahia that the French photographer Pierre Verger collected in his book "Retratos da Bahia" were among the first visual documents of Afro-Brazilian culture and included several stop-action images of the martial-arts dance capoeira. The choreographer and capoeira *mestre* Jelon Vieira pays tribute to that work with an evening-length dance named after Verger's book, which juxtaposes scenes of contemporary Bahian culture with impressions of the world captured by Verger's camera. With an original score by Tote Gira. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 1 at 7:30, March 2-5 at 8, and March 6 at 2 and 7:30.)

AMANDA LOULAKI & SHORT MEAN LADY
The downtown quintet's evening-length piece "La La La La, Resistance (The Island of Breezes)" is so athletic and aggressive that it could be a sport. Dancers in front of a black-and-white video installation display ferocious energy: a man hurtles into a wall; a woman dives to the floor and slides fifteen feet. Loulaki often adds obstructions just for the sake of it: a woman leaps with her arms pinned against her sides; a man pivots like a basketball player, balancing on one leg. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 2-5 at 7:30.)

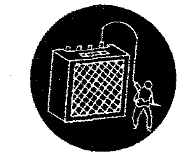
INTRODANS
The Dutch ballet company's program is family friendly, with a full roster of larky fare, such as Jiří Kylián's Mozart tribute, "Sechs Tänze," with its over-powdered wigs, talc-fuelled sneezes, and whizzing ball gowns on wheels; David Parsons's "Instinct," in which a fuzzy monster puppet reveals a second pair of legs; and Hans van Manen's "Black Cake," in which a short man squires a statuesque beauty across the dance floor. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. March 4 at 7, March 5 at 2 and 7, and March 6 at noon and 5. Through March 13.)

PERÚ NEGRO
For the past thirty-five years, this troupe has been considered the premier authority on Afro-Peruvian music and dance, emphasizing the African elements (mostly rhythmic) in Peru's hybrid tradition. Riding on the success of its New York début last year, the thirty-member group returns with its flirtatious courtship and carnival dances, its minuet-mocking "Toro Mata," and the foot-stomping duels called *zapateos*. The new dances include "Samba Malato" and the festive finale, "Estuve Covando." (Rose Theatre at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. March 5 at 8.)

ALEXANDROV RED ARMY CHORUS AND DANCE ENSEMBLE
Back in New York for the first time in fifteen years, the mostly male hundred-and-twenty-five-member ensemble brings out the balalaikas and the sabres and their trademark sonorous blended harmonies in an evening of song and dance. It's grand Soviet-style show biz with military flair, as obligatory favorites like "Kalinka" and "Dark Eyes" share the bill with "Hava Nagila" and the chorus from "Nabucco." In a gesture worthy of the old friendship tours, the stirring Soviet anthem is counterbalanced by a robust "God Bless America." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 6 at 2 and 8.)

PRINTZ DANCE PROJECT
An eclectic program from the San Francisco-based choreographer Stacey Printz features the première of "Surfacing," a dance piece that incorporates candid video interviews with teens. The musical guests Felonious and Kraddy provide live beat-boxing accompaniment as Printz supplies the movement, a fusion of jazz, hip-hop, and modern. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. March 3-6 at 8.)

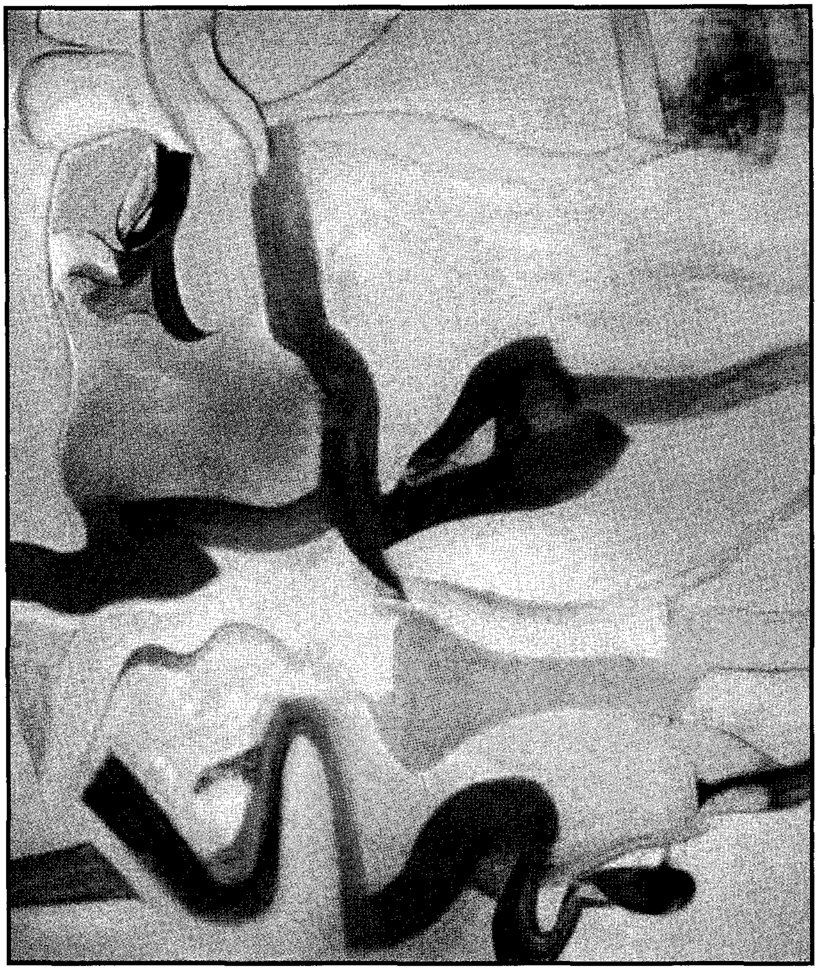
POP NOTES



RISING SUN
The record business would be better off if more albums began like MU's **"Out of Breach (Manchester's Revenge)"** (Output): "Welcome to MU world, bitch! I'm talking to the person who took thirteen hundred dollars from me on eBay, plus bitches who are releasing my vocals without my permission, and another shout out to those bitches who hid my tampons backstage. And especially to all haters, I'm about to kung fu you!"

It goes on as it begins: the chaotic and delightful second album from MU (pronounced "moo") is committed to letting impulse dictate content. The Japanese-born singer Mutsumi Kanamori and her American husband and producer, Maurice Fulton, make music that is generally filed with dance music, mostly because of Fulton's past as a producer of techno records. But "Out of Breach (Manchester's Revenge)" doesn't seem to have been designed to do anything except amuse the couple. Kanamori favors singing in a state of outrage: she berates her former record label, people who pick on Michael Jackson ("It's a very sad that interviewer can make cash by fake edit"), unnamed haters, and Paris Hilton, about whom she has mixed feelings ("I'm the richest party dumb girl / Would you like to look at my sex tape? / Natural beauty, photogenic"). When she is not enthusiastically navigating the English language, Kanamori sometimes clucks like a chicken, a reference to her fondness for the Japanese omelette *tamagoyaki*. Maurice Fulton's backing music is based on keyboards and drum machines but wanders happily into congas, sound effects, and fanfares straight out of Godzilla movies. "Out of Breach" works equally as punk, dance, comedy, or a radio play about an angry woman from rural Japan who lives in Sheffield, England, with a man from Baltimore who doesn't much like talking.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*



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Willem de Kooning. Untitled III. 1982. Oil on canvas. 80" x 70". The Museum of Modern Art, Partial and Promised Gift of UBS. © 2005 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. © UBS 2005. The key symbol and UBS are registered and unregistered trademarks of UBS. All rights reserved.

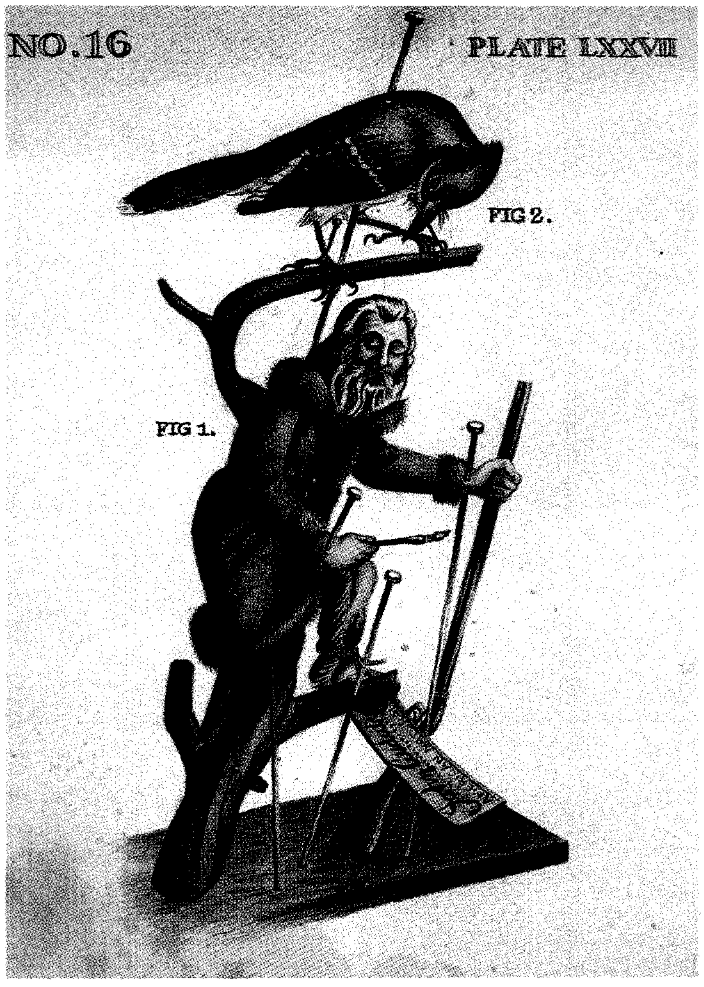
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COLORADO BALLET
The company returns to the Whitman Theatre at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts for the first time in six years, with new and repertory work, including Doug Varone's duet "Pounds and Stomps," set to music by the Yardbirds, and two New York premières: "Rachmaninov's Concerto," choreographed by Konstantin Uralsky, and "Vital Sensations," set to music by Roni Size and choreographed by Darrell Moultrie. (Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. March 6 at 2.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

TZADIK MUSIC FESTIVAL
You don't have to be Jewish to love John Zorn's intrepid record label, Tzadik. For the past decade, Tzadik ("righteous person" in Hebrew) has focussed on what might be called Jewish fusion, the blending of a Semitic sensibility with all manner of musical genres. The first artists in this monthlong celebration of the label are the guitarist **Tim Sparks** and the cellist **Erik Friedlander.** (Edmond J. Safra Hall, Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Pl. 646-437-4202. March 2 at 7.)



"Audubon's Aviary," at the New-York Historical Society.

ANDREW BRANDOU

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
March 2 at 8:30: "*McSweeney's* vs. They Might Be Giants" features Dave Eggers of the literary journal, along with the contributor and radio personality Sarah Vowell, in a musical and spoken-word throw-down with the venerable geek-rockers. March 3 at 8:30: The clear-voiced and clear-eyed singer-songwriter **Dar Williams.** (Allen Room, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

MÖTLEY CRÜE
Following the lucrative example set by Kiss, the original members of the notorious L.A. hair-metal band have temporarily patched things up for a full-scale reunion tour. The guitarist Mick Mars is in poor health, and there's still plenty of acrimony between the vocalist Vince Neil and the drummer Tommy Lee, so it'll be a miracle if the tour reaches fruition without incident. See them while you can. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. March 3 at 8.)

"ROULETTE CONCERT SERIES"
Roulette continues to present improvisers you won't hear uptown at Jazz at Lincoln Center. The adventurous ensembles and artists include Triptych Myth, on March 3; the multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee's Trio X, on March 4; the saxophonist Ned Rothenberg, in a solo performance, on March 5; and the saxophonist Michael Attias's Clinamen Orchestra, on March 6. (Location One, 26 Greene St. 212-219-8242. All shows are at 8:30.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 5 at 8: The Lima-based music and dance ensemble **Perú Negro** (see Dance). (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St.) March 6 and March 13 at 7: Two nights of classical Persian music, with the Iranian vocalist **Mohammad Reza Shajarian,** the lute master **Hossein Alizadeh,** and **Kayhan Kalhor,** the virtuosic spike-fiddle player. (Rose Theatre. For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7536.)

MADELEINE PEYROUX
Nearly a decade ago, Peyroux's first album, "Dreamland," took critics and casual listeners by storm with its blend of Billie Holiday-esque sass and country-and-Western spunk. "Careless Love," the long-awaited follow-up album, came out last year, offering a combination of offbeat standards, Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen covers, and originals. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-7171. March 5 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 2: A night of Irish music with **Lunasa** and **Dervish.** March 4: The old-school smooth rapper **Big Daddy Kane** joins the underground heroes the **Beatnuts.** March 5: **Hubert Sumlin,** whose sharp, scratchy guitar helped propel Howlin' Wolf's band for twenty years, celebrates the release of his latest record, "About Them Shoes," which includes contributions from the drummer Levon Helm and the guitarists Keith Richards and Eric Clapton. March 6: The **School of Rock.** The Philadelphia kids who have been studying power chords since their preteen years give a master class in the music of Frank Zappa, with the help of his longtime guitarist and vocalist **Ike Willis.**

BITTER END
147 Bleecker St. (212-673-7030)—March 4: **Amos Lee** (see This Week).

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 2-4: Twenty years ago, **Mark Olson** and **Gary Louris** were pioneers in the alt-country movement with their band, the Jayhawks. Olson quit the band in 1995, and though the Jayhawks endured and prospered (their 2003 album, "Rainy Day Music," is a favorite of the No Depression set) hard-core fans pined for Olson's return. That day has come, as Olson and Louris are on tour together for the first time in a decade, playing their old songs in an acoustic setting. March 7: The dance-driven indie rock of **VHS or Beta.** With the shimmering guitars of **Ambulance Ltd.**

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (212-691-1900)—March 4: The singer-songwriter **Kate Taylor**—the sister of James, Livingston, and Hugh—recently released the superb "Beautiful Road," her first CD in more than twenty years. Taylor's concerts tend to be inclusive, revival-like affairs. During recent appearances, she has played with, or summoned from the audience, Carly Simon, Tony Garnier (Bob Dylan's longtime bassist), and the virtuosic guitarist Arlen Roth, whose father is the *New Yorker* cartoonist Al Ross.

EMPLOYEES ONLY
510 Hudson St., between Christopher and W. 10th Sts. (212-242-3021)—From the outside, this new bar and restaurant looks like a dozen other slightly tacky storefronts in the West Village. A fortune-teller sits in the window, absent-mindedly staring through the glass. There's no sign, just a sleek logo, but once you press through the red-curtained vestibule you enter into a warm, old-fashioned establishment, right out of the New Deal era. The railway-car-like room has light-wood panelled walls, the owner-bartenders wear tidy white uniforms, and the drinks are imaginative and sharp. There's a fireplace at the far end, but there's no room for chairs in front of it. Not to worry, one taste of the gin-based Ginger Smash and its pleasantly sinus-clearing dose of freshly crushed root and you'll warm right up.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 5-6: The **Secret Machines** are a Texan trio with a weighty psychedelic sound that's as big as their home state. Against the grain of current indie vogue, the Machines ignore retro-eighties angular rock in favor of the rhythmic bombast of Led Zeppelin and the sprawling sonic surge of vintage Pink Floyd. Augmented by blinding onstage floodlights and volumes normally reserved for jet engines, their live show is an exercise in sensory engulfment. ♦ The New York Swing Dance Society gathers here the first Sunday of each month, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 212-696-9737.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 2: **Amos Lee** (see This Week).

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 2: **M. Ward.** Though he's traversed wide-ranging musical terrain in his dozen years on the scene—from dusty folk to backwater blues to throaty ballads—the indie sensation M. Ward has managed to forge a sound that is wholly his own: hushed and weathered, unusually sensitive and deeply personal. The Portland, Oregon, singer, songwriter, and guitarist is on tour behind "Transistor Radio," his new album, which he's dedicated to the remaining independent radio stations. March 4: **Beep Beep,** the latest band to sign with the Omaha label Saddle Creek (home of Bright Eyes and the Faint), mixes brazen guitar work with yelping vocals, recalling the dawn of post-punk music. March 5: The beloved Japanese all-girl trio **Shonen Knife.**

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—March 1: **Amos Lee** (see This Week). March 7: The Cuban guitarist **Juan-Carlos Formell.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—March 8: While politically disaffected Americans are moving to Canada, that country's music is moving south. Montreal's **Stars** are poised to be this spring's revelation: subtler than their labelmates Broken Social Scene and less frantic than the Arcade Fire, they bury grim insights about sex and romance under layers of fuzzy guitar and antique synthesizers. With **Apostle of Hustle** and **I Am Kloot.**

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—March 4: The **Capitol Years** started out as a one-man garage band and have matured nicely into a sharp outfit perfectly content to rummage sixties guitar-pop. Their new album is called "Let Them Drink."

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—March 3: The Colombian singer **Marta Gomez.** March 5: The singer-songwriter **Terre Roche** makes a rare New York City appearance.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through March 26: The vocalist **Tierney Sutton** and her trio.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 5: The Cuban émigré **Arturo Sandoval** is an athletic trumpeter who regularly transforms excess into a virtue.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through April 9, the big, unabashed voice of **Betty Buckley.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Through March 6: The pianist **Benny Green** has lately been heard in a duo setting with the guitarist Russell Malone, but here he's back to leading a trio. Mentored by the prodigious Oscar Peterson, Green leavens his finger-busting moves with funky filigree.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through March 12: **Chita Rivera.** What becomes a theatre legend most? How about defining roles in the original Broadway productions of "West Side Story," "Bye Bye Birdie," "Chicago," and "Kiss of the Spider Woman"? Expect the actress, singer, and dancer to tear up Feinstein's sliver of a stage.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—March 2-6: The **Ravi Coltrane** quartet. On his new album, "In Flux," the saxophonist continues his quest to find his own voice while acknowledging his father's mighty legacy. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through March 6: The saucy **Lavay Smith** and her **Red Hot Skillet Lickers** serve up a week of swing.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through March 6: The **Wessell Anderson** quintet. His name remains immediately associated with his boss, Wynton Marsalis, but Anderson's albums and side projects have established a distinct musical identity. He's a soulful improviser who revels in his New Orleans-by-way-of-Brooklyn roots. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—When Albrecht Dürer fled Nuremburg in 1505 to escape an outbreak of the plague, he left behind three uncompleted panels. In the exhibition **"Left Unfin-**

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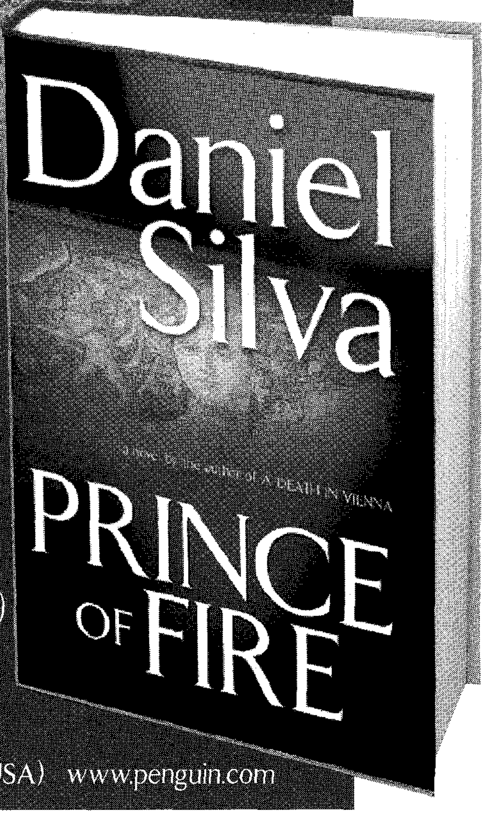

STEINBERG AT THE NEW YORKER

BY JOEL SMITH • INTRODUCTION BY IAN FRAZIER

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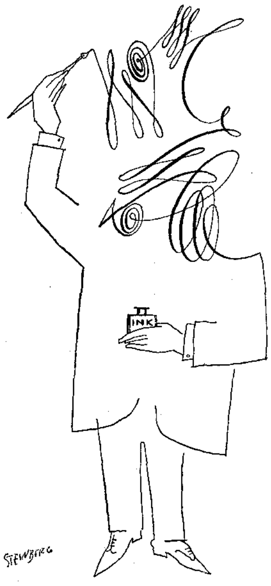


ished by Albrecht Dürer," they are reunited for the first time in centuries. The Met's own "Salvator Mundi," with its unpainted face of Christ, shows Dürer working inward, from the edges to the center, while two diminutive panels of hermit saints, "John the Baptist" and "Onuphrius," are roughly covered with a first, almost pastel layer of paint. An infrared reflectogram and a digital scan displayed alongside the trio allow the Met's experts to hash out whether the panels were conceived jointly as an altarpiece. It's also a fine show for those who just want a peek under the varnish of an Old Master painting. Through March 27. ♦ **"Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640): The Drawings."** Through April 3. ♦ **"From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca: Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master."** Through May 1. ♦ Duccio's "Madonna and Child," circa 1300, a triumphant recent acquisition for the Met. Through May 15. ♦ **"Wild: Fashion Untamed."** Clothes and accessories derived from and inspired by animals. Through March 13. ♦ **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm."** Through June 5. ♦ **"Heritage of Power: Ancient Sculpture from West Mexico, the Andrall E. Pearson Family Collection."** Through April 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Thomas Demand"** opens March 4 (see This Week). ♦ In **"Contemporary Voices: Works from the UBS Art Collection,"** some forty works promised to MOMA as a corporate gift are accompanied by thirty more from the firm's collection. The exhibition was arranged by in-house curators targeting gaps in the museum's own holdings, and it is installed old-MOMA style, as a chronological primer on late-twentieth-century art. Selections from the sixties, seventies, and eighties include an excellent Guston, two good Richters, a nice Artschwager, and a wonderful room of Susan Rothenbergs. Younger artists, not surprisingly, are less well served; in the last room, only Andreas Gursky is represented by a really first-class piece. Through April 25. ♦ **"Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape,"** a survey of innovative landscape-design projects from the last twenty years. Through May 16. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The Guggenheim has the largest collection of work by Vasily Kandinsky in the United States, and its curators have decided to devote one gallery to his work permanently. **"Kandinsky Gallery: An Inaugural Selection"** kicks things off. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Tim Hawkinson,"** a mid-career retrospective of the California artist's diverse inventions. Through May 29. ♦ **"Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper."** Through May 8. ♦ **"Ellen Gallagher: DeLuxe."** A series of embellished images based on advertisements from mid-century African-American magazines. Through May 15. ♦ **"James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence."** Drawings, installations, and sculpture. Through March 6. ♦ **"Political Nature,"** a modest gathering of prints and drawings by Walton Ford, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Frank Moore, and Stephanie Syjuco. Through March 27. ♦ **"Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium."** A large-scale video installation made in 2001. Through March 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

ASIA SOCIETY

Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India,"** an exhibition presented jointly with the Queens Museum of Art, opens March 1. ♦ **"Imperial Elegance: Chinese Ceramics from the Asia Society's Rockefeller Collection."** Through May 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits."** Paintings and sculptures dating from pre-Columbian times to the present. Through March 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Audubon's Aviary"** pairs forty of the artist's original watercolors with ornithological models and mounts, video footage of the different birds, and an audio presentation of birdcalls. Through March 27. ♦ **"Thomas Paine: Patriot and Provocateur."** Through April 24. ♦ Three hundred years' worth of New York cityscapes are on view in **"Impressions of New York: Prints from the New-York Historical Society,"** allowing viewers to observe in flip-book fashion the evolution of streets, parks, and waterways. Through March 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

"Lower East Side, Woman Pointing, c. 1942," by Lisette Model, at Ricco/Maresca.

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ALEKSANDRA MIR

Working in the murky field between design and fine art can be an interesting aesthetic problem, and it's satisfying to see a young, adventurous practitioner bring political passion to an issue. Too bad, then, that Mir's utilitarian goods promoting political causes—including tote bags, a sewing kit, a pocketknife, and a packet of dental floss, all emblazoned with the slogan "Keep Abortion Legal" in baby blue and pink—don't fully succeed as the conscientious Pop baubles they are meant to be. Through March 5. (Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

ROBERT MORRIS

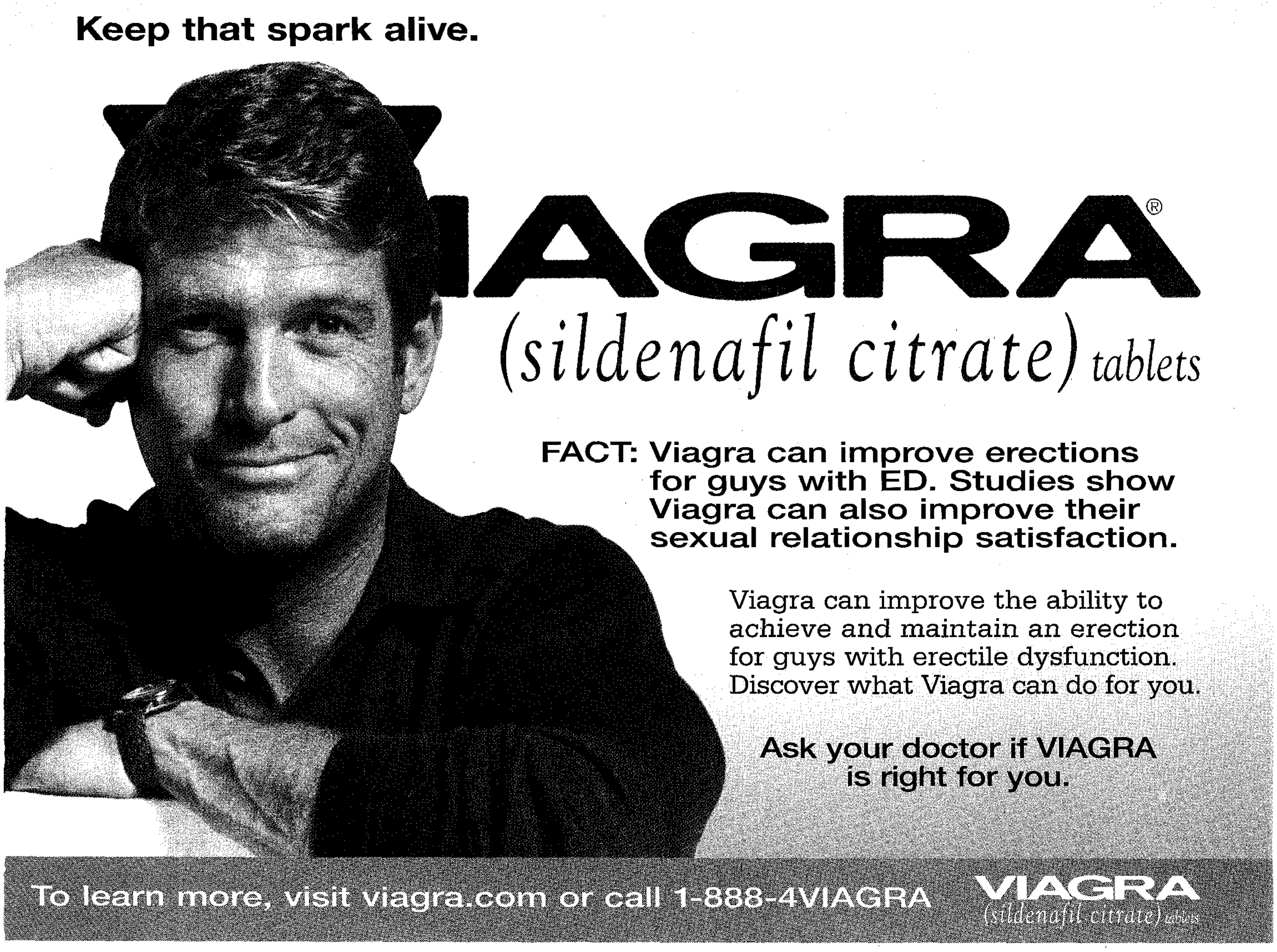
Looking at this body of recent work, it might be hard to believe Morris was a founder of sixties minimalism. Instead of spare abstraction, the encaustic-on-wood panel paintings feature grim, abandoned interiors that call to mind de Chirico's dramatically oblique angles or Edward Hopper's crisp American gothics. The white "Weeping House" has tar-black pigment dripping from the windowsills; "Park at Dusk" recalls Edward Gorey, but under a swooning, waxy, yellow-and-green sky. The objects raining from the sky in one painting appear to be evenly spaced neckties, à la Magritte's bowler hats, until you learn the title: "House and Bombs." Through March 19. (Castelli, 18 E. 77th St. 212-249-4470.)

SAUL STEINBERG

Sixty years' worth of *New Yorker* covers and drawings in their original forms. Through March 5. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

RICHARD WRIGHT

Unobtrusive, decorative gouaches, as discreet as wallpaper or stencilling, climb the gallery walls. Close inspection reveals traces of the pencilled grids on the wall that guided the artist's hand. Through March 5. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313.)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Talk with your doctor first. Make sure you are healthy enough to have sex. If you have chest pain, nausea, or other discomforts during sex, seek medical help right away. The same is true if you have an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. Call for help at once.

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PATIENT SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ABOUT

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This summary contains important information about VIAGRA®. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor's instructions. Read this information carefully before you start taking VIAGRA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you do not understand any of this information or if you want to know more about VIAGRA.

This medicine can help many men when it is used as prescribed by their doctors. However, VIAGRA is not for everyone. It is intended for use only by men who have a condition called erectile dysfunction. **VIAGRA must never be used by men who are taking medicines that contain nitrates of any kind, at any time. This includes nitroglycerin. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe or life threatening level.**

• What Is VIAGRA?

VIAGRA is a pill used to treat erectile dysfunction (impotence) in men. It can help many men who have erectile dysfunction get and keep an erection when they become sexually excited (stimulated).

You will not get an erection just by taking this medicine. VIAGRA helps a man with erectile dysfunction get an erection only when he is sexually excited.

• How Sex Affects the Body

When a man is sexually excited, the penis rapidly fills with more blood than usual. The penis then expands and hardens. This is called an erection. After the man is done having sex, this extra blood flows out of the penis back into the body. The erection goes away. If an erection lasts for a long time (more than 6 hours), it can permanently damage your penis. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have a prolonged erection that lasts more than 4 hours.

Some conditions and medicines interfere with this natural erection process. The penis cannot fill with enough blood. The man cannot have an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction if it becomes a frequent problem.

During sex, your heart works harder. Therefore sexual activity may not be advisable for people who have heart problems. Before you start any treatment for erectile dysfunction, ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex. If you have chest pains, dizziness or nausea during sex, stop having sex and immediately tell your doctor you have had this problem.

• How VIAGRA Works

VIAGRA enables many men with erectile dysfunction to respond to sexual stimulation. When a man is sexually excited, VIAGRA helps the penis fill with enough blood to cause an erection. After sex is over, the erection goes away.

• VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone

As noted above (*How Sex Affects the Body*), ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough for sexual activity.

If you take any medicines that contain nitrates – either regularly or as needed – you should never take VIAGRA. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine or recreational drug containing nitrates, your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe level. You could get dizzy, faint, or even have a heart attack or stroke. Nitrates are found in many prescription medicines that are used to treat angina (chest pain due to heart disease) such as:

- nitroglycerin (sprays, ointments, skin patches or pastes, and tablets that are swallowed or dissolved in the mouth)
- isosorbide mononitrate and isosorbide dinitrate (tablets that are swallowed, chewed, or dissolved in the mouth)

Nitrates are also found in recreational drugs such as amyl nitrate or nitrite ("poppers"). If you are not sure if any of your medicines contain nitrates, or if you do not understand what nitrates are, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

VIAGRA is only for patients with erectile dysfunction. VIAGRA is not for newborns, children, or women. Do not let anyone else take your VIAGRA. VIAGRA must be used only under a doctor's supervision.

• What VIAGRA Does Not Do

- VIAGRA does not cure erectile dysfunction. It is a treatment for erectile dysfunction.
- VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from getting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV — the virus that causes AIDS.
- VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

• What To Tell Your Doctor Before You Begin VIAGRA

Only your doctor can decide if VIAGRA is right for you. VIAGRA can cause mild, temporary lowering of your blood pressure. You will need to have a thorough medical exam to diagnose your erectile dysfunction and to find out if you can safely take VIAGRA alone or with your other medicines. Your doctor should determine if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you:

- have ever had any heart problems (e.g., angina, chest pain, heart failure, irregular heart beats, heart attack or narrowing of the aortic valve)
- have ever had a stroke
- have low or high blood pressure
- have a rare inherited eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa
- have ever had any kidney problems
- have ever had any liver problems
- have ever had any blood problems, including sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- are allergic to sildenafil or any of the other ingredients of VIAGRA tablets
- have a deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or ever had an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- have stomach ulcers or any types of bleeding problems
- are taking any other medicines

• VIAGRA and Other Medicines

Some medicines can change the way VIAGRA works. Tell your doctor about **any medicines** you are taking. Do not start or stop taking any medicines before checking with your doctor or pharmacist. This includes prescription and nonprescription medicines or remedies:

- Remember, VIAGRA should never be used with medicines that contain nitrates (see *VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone*).
- If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy for the treatment of high blood pressure or prostate problems, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as you take your dose of alpha-blocker.
- If you are taking a protease inhibitor, your dose may be adjusted (please see *Finding the Right Dose for You*).
- VIAGRA should not be used with any other medical treatments that cause erections. These treatments include pills, medicines that are injected or inserted into the penis, implants or vacuum pumps.

• Finding the Right Dose for You

VIAGRA comes in different doses (25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg). If you do not get the results you expect, talk with your doctor. You and your doctor can determine the dose that works best for you.

- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor prescribes.
- If you think you need a larger dose of VIAGRA, check with your doctor.
- VIAGRA should not be taken more than once a day.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25 mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48 hour period. If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as your dose of alpha-blocker.

• How To Take VIAGRA

Take VIAGRA about one hour before you plan to have sex. Beginning in about 30 minutes and for up to 4 hours, VIAGRA can help you get an erection if you are sexually excited. If you take VIAGRA after a high-fat meal (such as a cheeseburger and french fries), the medicine may take a little longer to start working. VIAGRA can help you get an erection when you are sexually excited. You will not get an erection just by taking the pill.

• Possible Side Effects

Like all medicines, VIAGRA can cause some side effects. These effects are usually mild to moderate and usually don't last longer than a few hours. Some of these side effects are more likely to occur with higher doses. The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, flushing of the face, and upset stomach. Less common side effects that may occur are temporary changes in color vision (such as trouble telling the difference between blue and green objects or having a blue color tinge to them), eyes being more sensitive to light, or blurred vision.

In rare instances, men have reported an erection that lasts many hours. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If not treated right away, permanent damage to your penis could occur (see *How Sex Affects the Body*).

Heart attack, stroke, irregular heart beats, and death have been reported rarely in men taking VIAGRA. Most, but not all, of these men had heart problems before taking this medicine. It is not possible to determine whether these events were directly related to VIAGRA.

VIAGRA may cause other side effects besides those listed on this sheet. If you want more information or develop any side effects or symptoms you are concerned about, call your doctor.

• Accidental Overdose

In case of accidental overdose, call your doctor right away.

• Storing VIAGRA

Keep VIAGRA out of the reach of children. Keep VIAGRA in its original container. Store at 25°C (77°F); excursions permitted to 15-30°C (59-86°F) [see USP Controlled Room Temperature].

• For More Information on VIAGRA

VIAGRA is a prescription medicine used to treat erectile dysfunction. Only your doctor can decide if it is right for you. This sheet is only a summary. If you have any questions or want more information about VIAGRA, talk with your doctor or pharmacist, visit www.viagra.com, or call 1-888-4VIAGRA.

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GALLERIES–CHELSEA

JUDY FOX

An allegorical quintet of life-sized figures cast in luminously painted resin enact a dream—or nightmare—of matriarchal power and vulnerability. Fox's zaftig Venus wears a helmetlike basket on her head and confronts four prepubescent boys—one African, one Asian, one Caucasian, and one Arab or Semitic. Each child wears a headdress (counting the blond boy's curls) and gestures cryptically at the woman, who could be genuflecting or conducting. A tableau of global aggression? Oedipal drama writ large? It could be either, but the spooky fleshiness of Fox's material keeps the objects interesting. Through March 12. (P.P.O.W., 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

RUDOLF STINGEL

The artist who cozied up Grand Central with a loud floral carpet goes minimal with a "There's no there there" installation. Stingel gives a subtle tweak to the white cube by covering the polished concrete floor with slabs of particleboard painted stark white. Over the course of the exhibition, the false floor will get scuffed and grubby as viewers tread their own collaborative abstraction across its pristine expanse. Presiding over this charged nothing is Stingel's enormous black-and-white painting of his longtime dealer Paula Cooper, based on a 1984 Mapplethorpe portrait. Through March 12. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

GAVIN TURK

Turk's confident good looks are showcased in a series of faux-Warhol portraits of the artist impersonating Elvis, Che Guevara, and Joseph Beuys. The imitation doesn't stop there: bronze beer cans, smashed and painted, are an obvious nod to Jasper Johns. A flattened chrome pillow on the floor pays homage to Warhol's helium-filled "Silver Clouds," and a work in which Turk's signature is cast as a shadow on a white field recalls Rauschenberg's monochrome paintings of the fifties. The show might seem witty or downright cocky, depending perhaps on your reverence for the originals—and your ability to spot the references. Through March 5. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

KIT WHITE

Vague, brushy landscapes overlaid with delicately ambling scrawls. The layered elements don't have much in common at first glance, but the romantic backdrops harmonize pleasingly with the ravelling abstractions. The effect is almost like wire sculptures poised in stormy fields. Through March 19. (Zarre, 529 W. 20th St. 212-255-0202.)

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

URS FISCHER

A delightfully wacky Hansel-and-Gretel structure—a traditional Swiss house constructed with loaves of bread (from Sullivan Street Bakery) nailed to a wooden frame—serves as the centerpiece of this show. Fischer evokes a hard-core olfactory nostalgia that produces a longing for hearth and home—the old country, whatever and wherever that might be. A photograph of a reconstructed chalet room in a Swiss museum, dripping with carved wooden effects and antlers hanging from the ceiling, completes the effect, reminding us that traditional folk culture can be as kitschy as Disneyland. Through March 5. (Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.)

RICHARD TUTTLE

Tuttle's serial works in bits of cardboard and dots of paint intentionally court a grumpy, "My kid could do that" response. Whether or not you enjoy his fragile whimsies will depend on how you feel about the uneasy mix of throwaway construction with weighty questions regarding the nature of imagery, motion, perception, and form. The second, much simpler half of Tuttle's two-part show (added in response to what he did in part one, which closed Feb. 26) features repeated variations on a square-and-circle shape and a floor sculpture in which two narrow lanes along the baseboards are lined with bright-pink paper and wee glass balls. Through March 5. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166.)

"A FINE ROMANCE: THE DARKER SIDE OF VALENTINE'S DAY"
Gallery artists and other contributors present alternatives to Hallmark sentiment and box-of-chocolates predictability. Through March 5. (Atlantic, 40 Wooster St. 212-219-3183.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

TONY STANZIONE
Stanzione's outdoor sculpture "Cold Storage" is an oversized stainless-steel structure—like a bunk bed for giants—irrigated by a hidden hydraulic mechanism. The appearance of the sculpture is entirely dependent on the winter weather: in freezing temperatures, it becomes an urban Bridal Veil, a frozen waterfall cascading from the minimalist frame. The recent warm snap found the project melting away, however, to a few meagre icicles, which made the documentary photos indoors more compelling than the work itself. Through March 14. (Black and White, 483 Driggs Ave. 718-599-8775.)

"DECIPHER: HAND-PAINTED DIGITAL"
For these ten artists, the computer has been absorbed into the studio like any another tool, as the camera obscura or the Claude glass was by previous generations. David Brody's isometric abstractions migrate seamlessly from rice-paper drawings to video animation; James Esber's morphed portraits of Abraham Lincoln are daubed in colored plasticine; Marsha Cottrell makes delicate, swirling images from the "virtual rubble" stored in her hard drive. Also included are works by Millree Hughes, Claire Corey, Franklin Evans, Carl Fudge, Cadence Giersbach, Bruce Pearson, and Randy Wray. Through March 5. (Rotunda, 33 Clinton St. 718-875-4047.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

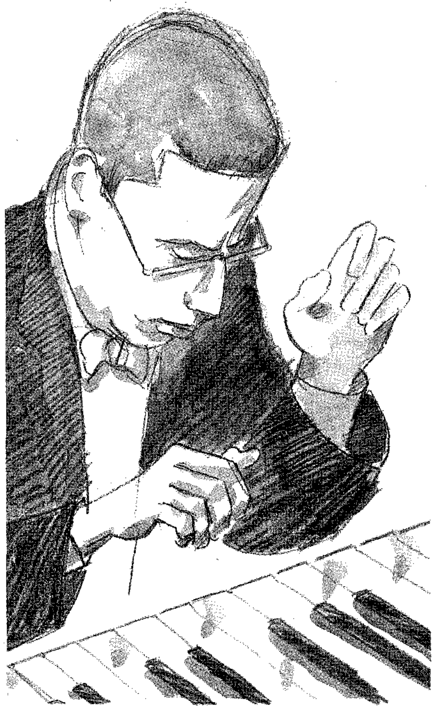
PETER HUJAR
Downtown New York at night in the seventies and early eighties, before SoHo and the meatpacking district were turned into shopping malls, was anarchic, filthy, and fun. In these glistening photographs of unpopulated streets and lighted downtown office buildings; of a smashed car and a defunct diner; of angelic, muscled pretty boys and flocks of giddy queens on Halloween, Hujar captures the high jinks, the innocence, and also the wreckage of this vivid period, when people came to the city to reinvent themselves. The images recall Abbott, Arbus, and Evans but have their own distinct period feel. In "Blanket 1985," a piece of old carpet, folded inside out, is heaped on the sidewalk, alongside a string of battered Guston-like trash cans, suggesting the era's cold, bitter comfort; two years later, Hujar, along with so many of his subjects, was dead of AIDS. Through March 5. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

LISA KERESZI
These color photographs of a recent New York City mostly depict a place that is just out of reach. A chalkboard from an abandoned classroom on Governors Island still has the teacher's name neatly printed across the slate. Other images conjure up the same fractured, seedy past, from the Show World sign to Coney Island's Wonder Wheel glowing, in double, against a night sky. Also on view is the ethereal début solo show by the talented Jodie Vicenta Jacobson. Through March 26. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

IMRE KINSZKI
This is a fascinating show of mostly tiny vintage photographs by Kinszki, a native of Budapest who was born in 1901 and killed at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1945. Kinszki had a pitch-perfect modernist sensibility, and his work—in which much is made of shadows on sidewalks and crazy angles—is a very welcome addition to the canon. Through March 26. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764.)

KARINE LAVAL
A series of color photographs of swimming pools in France, Portugal, and Spain, along with images of Norwegian snowscapes. They have a strong sensual and graphic presence, and some (e.g., the baby-blue side of a new car, with a red door handle and windows frosted with snow) come dangerously close to hip advertising. These relaxed pictures don't strive for anything big, which is part of their appeal: the intertwining of atmosphere and memory is enough. Through March 5. (Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007.)

LEON LEVINSTEIN
Like all street photographers, Levinstein was drawn to people who appeared not to be doing much of anything. He found them in Coney Island and on the Lower East Side, in Times Square and Central Park. Often, he photographed his subjects from behind: a young man combing his dirty hair, his suspenders marking a white "X" in the center of the frame; the immense sphere of a woman's blond hairdo; the smooth, suntanned back of a fat man at the beach, recalling Weston's bell pepper. But Levinstein's most arresting images confront his subjects head on: a prostitute in a Pucci-style minidress glaring back at the camera; three children—one of them naked—looking out from a tenement window. Through March 5. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)



Jonathan Biss plays music by Schubert and Kirchner at Zankel Hall on March 8.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

CHARLES H. TRAUB
The visual ironies of a few of these color photographs are so obvious, and sometimes so silly, that you wonder if you've missed something. In one, a woman seated at a conference table, her arm resting atop her head, shares an office moment with a male colleague while a model in an underwear ad on the wall behind her strikes the same pose. Other photographs, though, of a blue wading pool, which completely fills the tiny courtyard of a soulless yellow brick apartment building, a regimental alignment of pigeons peering over the edge of a rooftop, and a mother-son team of tourists resting in Pompeii, both in red sweaters, venture into an amusing absurdism. Through April 2. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

Short List

SARAH ANNE JOHNSON
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.
Through March 5.

LISETTE MODEL
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.
Through March 19.

TINA MODOTTI AND EDWARD WESTON
Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.
Through March 12.

JACK PIERSON
Danziger, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-6778.
Through March 19.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
March 3 at 10 A.M.: A sale of American paintings, including works by James David Smillie, Louis Comfort Tiffany ("Florida," an oil on canvas board), and Guy Pène du Bois. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE
March 2 at 10 A.M.: "Doyle at Home," an occasional auction of furniture and decorative art, including a selection of twentieth-century art and design. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN
March 3 at 10:30 A.M.: The sinister undertones of Louis Lozowick's lithograph "Nuns in Wall Street" and a luminous quartet of maritime engravings by Rockwell Kent hint at the expressive richness contained in an auction of American prints from the collection of Keith Sheridan. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

WORKS ON PAPER
In the seventeenth annual show, more than eighty dealers offer a vast selection of watercolors, prints, drawings, photographs, and illustrated books. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-777-5218. March 3-6.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
March 2, March 5, and March 8 at 8: Verdi's **"Nabucco,"** with Maria Guleghina (in the role of Abigaille), Wendy White, Gwyn Hughes Jones, Nikolai Putilin, and Paata Burchuladze; Joseph Colaneri conducts. (These are the final performances.) ♦ March 3 and March 7 at 7: The conductor Fabio Luisi makes his Met début in a revival of **"Don Carlo,"** for many Verdi's richest and most penetrating score. Any extra energy will be welcome, since John Dexter's quasi-realist production, not one of his successes, can easily drain the life out of a performance. The sturdy cast includes Sondra Radvanovsky, Luciana D'Intino (in another début), Richard Margison, Dwayne Croft, Ferruccio Furlanetto, and Burchuladze. ♦ March 4 at 8: Franco Vassallo, a young Milanese baritone whose performances in the title role of **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia"** have been savored at La Scala and the Vienna State Opera, makes his Met début in the role, joining a cast that includes Katarina Karnéus, Matthew Polenzani, Carlos Chausson, and Furlanetto; Maurizio Benini conducts. ♦ March 5 at 1:30: The voices of José Cura, who always works to be his best, and of Denyce Graves, who works hard when it really counts (as in their second-act duet, "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix"), propel a fine revival of **"Samson et Dalila,"** an opera the Met has been presenting faithfully for a hundred and ten years. Bertrand de Billy's conducting gives the music lightness, speed, and proportion—everything French, that is. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
The Hal Prince production of **"Candide,"** Leonard Bernstein's rollicking treatment of Voltaire, returns to open the company's spring season with two Broadway stars in the character roles: Judy Kaye, as the Old Lady, and John Cullum, as Pangloss. George Manahan, City Opera's music director, conducts. March 4-5 at 8: Two previews, with Georgia Jarman and William Ferguson as Cunegonde and Candide. ♦ March 5-6 at 1:30: Two more previews, with Anna Christy and Keith Jameson replacing Jarman and Ferguson. ♦ March 8 at 6:30: The opening-night gala performance, with Christy and Jameson. (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

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TABLES FOR TWO

LO SCALCO
313 Church St. (212-343-2900)—Menu gimmicks don't much alter the eating. Whether dishes are organized by food group, animal habitat, or, as at Craft, method of preparation, eventually a plate of food comes, and you shovel it down. Still, gimmickry can concentrate the mind. At Lo Scalco, a new Italian place in Tribeca, eight categories of ingredient (artichoke, Dover sole, duck, etc.) are available in three courses: appetizer, pasta, and meat or fish. Frankly, everything looks promising on the page. To whittle it all down you might want to consider the Henry Ford approach: three people divvy up a category, so that one of you handles, say, the Dover-sole salad with string beans and walnuts, another the sole ravioli, and a third the roasted sole filet. There's also the Wade Boggs method: one person dines on sole, three courses of it, in all its guises. Or you can choose according to shape: create a "squiggly course," consisting of the sole salad (the sole strips as twisty as cheese sticks), the sole ravioli (each *raviolo* like an adolescent albino eel), and—a surprise from the tomato department—an arrangement of three different pastas with sauces made from yellow, green, and red tomatoes.

Once you've got the menu management down, you can sit back and savor Lo Scalco's manifest charms. First, the room, open and airy, with arching white beams and giant ceramic chandeliers—Kimberly Mafrici, the architect, is married to the chef, Mauro Mafrici (they are also the owners). Second, the sommelier, who strides the floor with a *taste-vin* (one of those fancy silver tasting bowls) hanging from her neck and dispenses dependable advice, melodious Italian label-readings, and declarations that stick with you for days: "With an amarone, it's all about power." And last, right there under your nose, the food. It is a pity that there is no twenty-four-course tasting menu (the max is six), because Mafrici's variations on (and deviations from) the avowed ingredients can be astonishing. One wonders, turduckenishly, about the duck breast rolled with suckling pig. *Duckling brig?* When it arrives, under a white china dome, a clean jerk reveals a handsome specimen, a barnyard take on the jelly roll. (Open Thursdays and Fridays for lunch and Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $18-$34; tasting menus $48-$64.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

COLLEGIATE CHORALE
Deborah Voigt takes the title role in a gala concert performance of Beethoven's **"Fidelio,"** with a cast that also includes Thomas Moser, James Morris, Harolyn Blackwell, Stanford Olsen, and Tom Fox. Robert Bass conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 3 at 8.)

"PALLADIO"
Jonathan Dee's 1998 novel about the intersection of art and advertising is the basis for a new music-video performance work by the avant-garde composer Ben Neill and the media artist Bill Jones (which includes songs with lyrics written by Lance Jensen, the creative director at Modernista who designed Volkswagen's "Drivers Wanted" campaign). Mikel Rouse, the composer-performer best known for his cutting talk-show opera "Dennis Cleveland," leads the cast. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 4-5 at 8:30.)

AMATO OPERA
The little opera company that could, a mix of aspiring professionals and hearty amateurs, offers a new production of **"The Merry Widow,"** under the direction of Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. March 5 at 7:30 and March 6 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel, indulging his taste for orchestral grandeur, leads the Philharmonic in an all-Strauss program: the tone poems "Ein Heldenleben" and "Don Juan," along with the Suite from the opera "Der Rosenkavalier." (March 3 and March 8 at 7:30 and March 5 at 8.) ♦ Maazel conducts "Don Juan" and the "Rosenkavalier" Suite as the finale of a Saturday matinée that begins with members of the orchestra playing chamber works by Bartók ("Contrasts") and John Harbison. (March 5 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The orchestra, celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, brings along two powerhouse performers—the cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the violinist Gil Shaham—for a concert mixing Asian concertos (including Chen Yi's "Ballad, Dance, and Fantasy") with music by Strauss ("Don Juan" and the "Rosenkavalier" Suite). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 2 at 8.)

SONOS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
A rare performance of Sibelius's incidental music for "The Tempest" is the centerpiece of a program that also includes small-orchestra versions of Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune" and Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer" (with the bass-baritone Duncan Hartman) along with Michael Torke's "Music on the Floor." (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. March 3 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
Andrew Parrott, the group's eminent director and an advocate of an "authentic" minimalist approach to performing Bach's choral works, conducts two performances of the "St. Matthew Passion" with only eight singers—including Marc Molomot (the Evangelist) and Thomas Meglioranza (Jesus). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-717-9246. March 3-4 at 8.)

OLIVER KNUSSEN'S ZANKEL BAND
The British composer-conductor, zealously loyal to a small group of British and American modernists, leads an impressive ensemble (including such superb musicians as the oboist Jacqueline Leclair and the cellist Fred Sherry) in music by Turnage, Wuorinen ("Cyclops"), Goehr ("Marching to Carcassone," like the Wuorinen an American première), and Knussen himself, with the pianist Peter Serkin as special guest. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. March 5 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

SARAH GRUNSTEIN
In the second of three concerts, the young Australian pianist plays music by Bach, Brahms (the Fantasies, Op. 116), and Schumann (the Fantasy in C Major). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 2 at 8.)

TOM CHIU
The violinist and Flux Quartet founder underpins a solo recital of Xenakis, Scelsi, Berio, and Nancarrow with seventeenth-century works by Heinrich Biber and Marco Uccellini. (Italian Academy, Columbia University, 1161 Amsterdam Ave. March 2 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The Orion String Quartet plays Bartók's Quartet No. 2 and a new work by Chick Corea, "The Adventures of Hippocrates." (Rose Studio, Rose Building. 212-875-5788. March 3 at 6:45.)

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET
The elegant young American quartet, in its only New York performance this season, offers music by Haydn (the "Fifths" Quartet), Mozart, and Schubert (the Quartet No. 14, "Death and the Maiden"). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. March 3 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE
March 4 at 8: A cluster of young string quartets—the Pacifica, the Chiara, and the Ying—gather for

octets by Mendelssohn and Milhaud and Steve Reich's "Triple Quartet." ♦ March 5 at 8: George Steel, continuing his "Brahms the Progressive" series, brings the Jacques Thibaud String Trio and the pianist Max Levinson together for piano quartets by Brahms (in C Minor, Op. 60) and by the Master's iconoclastic follower, Max Reger. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.)

LOUIS LORTIE
Velvety lyricism and intellectual perspective mix ideally in the playing of this French-Canadian pianist, who is rapidly gaining the stature of a major artist. Ravel's "La Valse" closes the program and provides its theme, which also encompasses waltzes by Schubert, Liszt ("Soirées de Vienne" and the "Valses Oubliées" Nos. 1 and 2), and Berlioz, along with a Schubert homage by Helmut Lachenmann, Germany's leading craftsman of extreme sounds. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 5 at 8.)

BALTIMORE CONSORT: "CANCIONERO!"
The noted Renaissance band performs a selection of fifteenth-century Spanish music at New York's authentic medieval venue. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 212-650-2290. March 6 at 1 and 3.)

TRIO SOLISTI
The clarinettist David Krakauer joins the vibrant young piano trio in Paul Moravec's "Tempest Fantasy," which won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2004. Trios by Brahms (No. 3) and Ravel complete the program. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. March 6 at 2. Tickets at the door.)

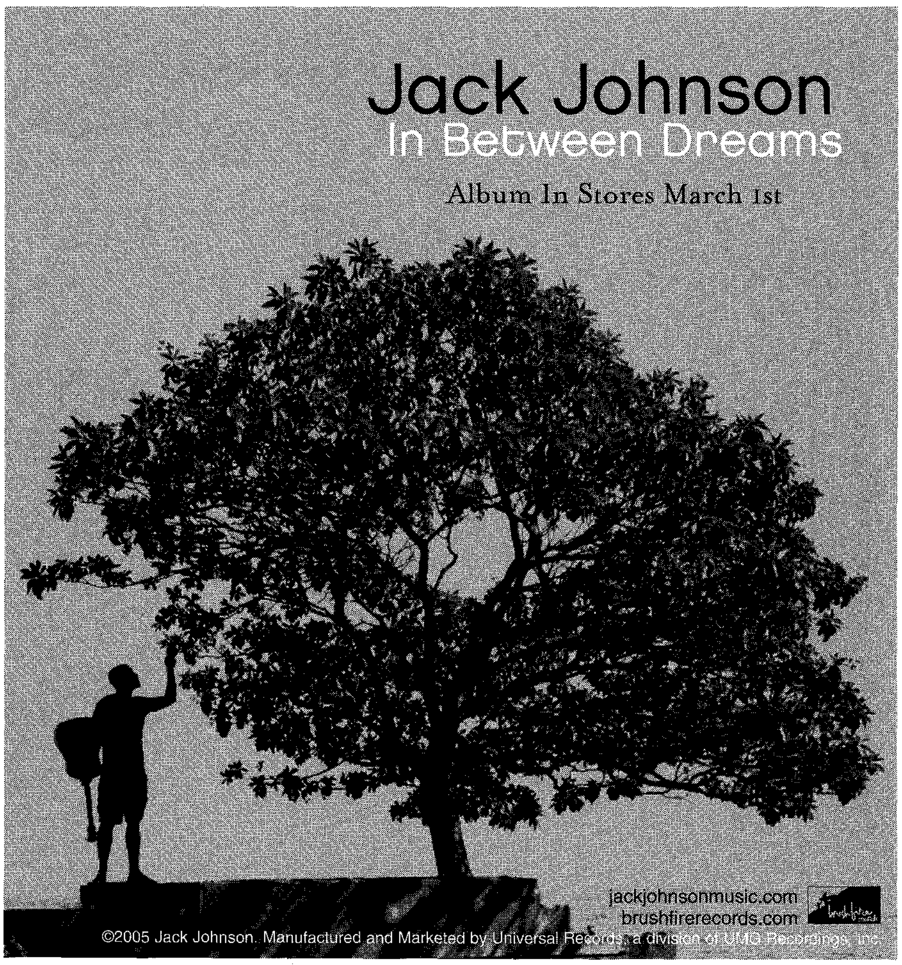
BAIBA SKRIDE
Belgium's Queen Elisabeth Competition bestowed its 2001 First Prize on this young Latvian violinist, who performs sonatas by Beethoven, Schnittke, Bartók, and Ravel at Merkin Concert Hall. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 6 at 8.)

JONATHAN BISS
The young American pianist, a scion of America's classical aristocracy (Barber wrote the Cello Concerto for his grandmother), offers an intensely Germanic program of Berg (the Sonata), Mozart, Schubert (the Sonata in A Major, D. 959), and the Schoenberg disciple Leon Kirchner. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. March 8 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
March 2 at 6:30: The actors Dawn Akemi Saito, Patricia Kalember, and Rochelle Oliver read stories about women and their dreams by Lorrie Moore, Julie Otsuka, and Grace Paley. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ March 2-3 at 7:30: The Poetry Society of America's Festival of New American Poets presents nearly two dozen poets over two nights. The participants include Eric Baus, Mark Bibbins, Sherwin Bitsui, Oni Buchanan, Dan Chiasson, Joshua Corey, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Miranda Field, Cathy Park Hong, Ilya Kaminsky, Adrian Matejka, Chelsey Minnis, Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon, Srikanth Reddy, Spencer Reece, and Dorothea Tanning. (Tishman Auditorium, the New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ March 7 at 8: Kate Burton, George Grizzard, Paul Hecht, Mary Beth Hurt, and others offer a staged reading of "The Rage of Achilles," from Robert Fagles's translation of the Iliad. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ March 8 at 7:30: The novelists Jonathan Lethem and Colson Whitehead team up for the first installment of "Readings on the 4th Floor," a new series designed to raise money for a grade-school library. (P.S. 107, 1301 Eighth Ave., between 13th and 14th Sts., Park Slope, Brooklyn. For information about tickets, call 718-783-3075.)

TALK
March 2 at 7:30: The *New Yorker* cartoonists Matt Diffee and Harry Bliss talk about their work. Their colleague David Sipress is the host. (Dixon Place at the Marquee Theatre, 356 Bowery. For reservations, call 212-219-0736, ext. 106.)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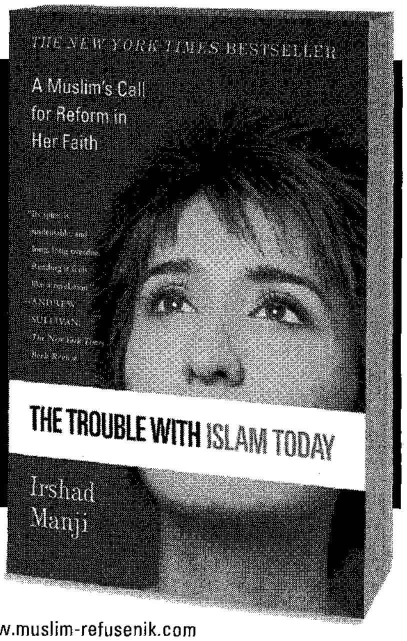

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MOVIES OPENING

BE COOL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 4.

THE BEST OF YOUTH
Beginning in Rome in 1966, Marco Tullio Giordana's six-hour drama traces the lives of the members of a middle-class family through several decades. In Italian. Opening March 2. (Film Forum.)

DEAR FRANKIE
A mother (Emily Mortimer) has been writing fake letters to her son (Jack McElhone) from the father he never had, in a drama directed by Shona Auerbach. With Gerard Butler. Opening March 4.

GUNNER PALACE
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening March 4. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

INTIMATE STORIES
In Carlos Sorin's road movie, three villagers travel across Patagonia to find a lost dog, deliver a birthday cake, and audition for a TV game show. In Spanish. Opening March 4. (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE JACKET
A Gulf War veteran (Adrien Brody) returns home to Vermont with a severe case of amnesia, in a psychological thriller directed by John Maybury. With Keira Knightley, Kris Kristofferson, Brad Renfro, and Jennifer Jason Leigh. Opening March 4.

THE PACIFIER
A comedy in which a troublesome Navy Seal (Vin Diesel) is assigned to protect the five children of a government scientist. Directed by Adam Shankman. Opening March 4.

THE RED ORCHESTRA
A documentary directed by Stefan Roloff about the largest of the resistance groups that fought against the Nazis in Berlin. In German. Opening March 2. (Anthology Film Archives.)

WALK ON WATER
Eytan Fox directed this thriller, in which a Mossad agent (Lior Ashkenazi) tracks down an aging Nazi war criminal. In English, German, and Hebrew. Opening March 4. (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Metro Twin.)

FILM NOTES

BORN INTO BROTHELS
Watching Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman's prize-winning documentary, shot in Calcutta's Sonagachi red-light district, where Briski lived, on and off, for years, one is initially held by the sensuousness of the colors and the beauty of the children—the offspring of prostitutes, eight, nine, twelve years old, who are growing up in the district and are surely heading into prostitution themselves. Then the "plot" of the movie kicks in. Briski gives the children cameras and teaches them to take pictures of their surroundings; they gain a sense of themselves, and they master a craft. But will Briski be able to get them out of the brothels (where their parents need them for economic reasons) and into decent schools? One is aware of Briski as a rather aggressive guardian angel from the West, who comes in and tries to save only a few children, but she's hardheaded and effective, and her quest makes sense.—*David Denby* (Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

LA CHIENNE
Jean Renoir's tragicomic triangle of a cashier-painter (Michel Simon), a gigololike pimp (Georges Flamant), and the woman who destroys them both—a reluctant demimondaine (Janie Marèze). What's most exhilarating about this 1931 movie is figuring out who everyone is at any instant: lover or buffoon, hero or villain, exploiter or victim. Simon's performance is forceful even when he's in repose. For Renoir, character is both action and inaction. His lambent lighting, restless camera, and emotion-charged stagecraft center attention on his doomed erotic fools and crystallize the pressures the world puts on every single soul. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Florence Gould Hall; March 8.)

SOUND
SCENE
TAKE
1
2
3
PROD
Etc...

CONSTANTINE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

DOWNFALL
The great Swiss-German actor Bruno Ganz gives a staggering performance as Adolf Hitler in this full-scale realist German production detailing the last ten days of the Third Reich. As the Red Army rampages through Berlin, Hitler and his staff have retreated to the bunker under the Reich Chancellery. They are all here—Himmler, Goebbels, Speer, the entire fascinating, loathsome crew of commanders, mad visionaries, and toadies (all brilliantly acted)—and, leading them still, a man so physically ill and constricted in movement that he looks like a broken-down puppet from a Bavarian travelling circus. The puppet comes to life, of course, in appalling self-pitying rants that are borderline funny. The entire movie teeters on the edge of sick comedy—in particular such scenes as the death of the Goebbels children, one by one, at the hands of their mother—and at times one longs for a coldly malicious ironist like Brecht or Fassbinder to come in and take over. The attempt to re-create Hitler in realistic terms has always been morally and imaginatively questionable—a compromise with the unspeakable that borders on complicity with it. Produced and written by Bernd Eichinger; directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel. In German.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/14 & 21/05.) (Film Forum.)

GUNNER PALACE
In late 2003 and early 2004, the filmmakers Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein hung out with the men and women of an American field-artillery unit in Baghdad and came back with this fragmentary but suggestive report. The movie has an absurdist framework: the company is billeted in a former palace that had belonged to Saddam's son Uday, a building that looks like a gigantic, crumbling Miami Beach hotel, complete with swimming pool and putting green. At night, in scary raids, the soldiers break into the houses of suspected bombmakers and often find nothing. Mostly very young, they are baffled and frustrated by a situation in which they are received not (as they had been told) as liberators but essentially as occupiers. Their innocence is both touching and exasperating. What right does anyone have to be so uninformed? Bitter rap lyrics, sometimes sung straight into the camera, serve as the descendant of the acid rock that played throughout Vietnam movies.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

HITCH
Smiling at a woman, his eyes crinkling, the actor Will Smith bears an uncanny resemblance to Bill Clinton. In this modern screwball comedy, Smith exerts his considerable charm as a swift, super-knowing "date doctor" who advises men of less than extraordinary appearance how to woo the women of their dreams. Some of his advice is cornball stuff, and some of it narrowly practical and probably true (if she fiddles with her keys at her doorstep, she wants to be kissed). Smith's principal student is a heavy-set accountant, played by the TV-comedy actor Kevin James, who is light on his feet in the tradition of such buoyant heavies as Zero Mostel and Jackie Gleason and possibly just as talented as those two. James's scenes with Smith and with Amber Valletta, who plays a bored heiress, are full of surprises. The movie is too long for what it has to say, but much of it is good-hearted fun. Stay for the dance sequence at the very end. Written by Kevin Bisch; directed by Andy Tennant.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

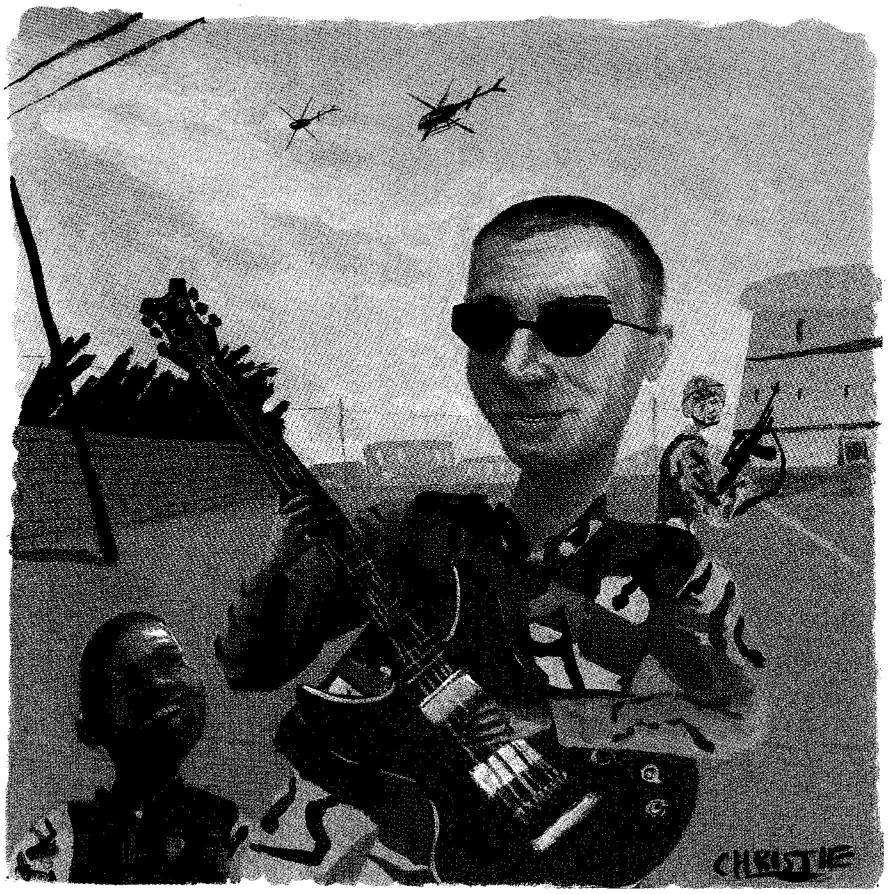
HOTEL RWANDA
Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Rwandan manager of the four-star Hôtel des Mille Collines, in Kigali, wears a blue suit and tie and is very polite, even deferential, toward everyone. Paul works for the Belgian company that owns the hotel, which has become an oasis for Europeans and for African élites. When the Hutu massacres of the Tutsi minority begin, in the spring of 1994, Paul keeps the Mille Collines running. He also, on the sly, establishes it as a haven for both Hutu and Tutsi fugitives, keeping them momentarily safe from the machete-wielding militia, who kill eight hundred thousand people in a few months. Working in Rwanda and South Africa, the writer-director, Terry George, convincingly stages the horrors outside the hotel: the paralyzing fear in the night, the vilely inciting radio broadcasts, the chaos and arbitrary madness of the slaughter. But the true drama of "Hotel Rwanda" lies in the character of Paul, who is betrayed by the Europeans who formed him but who holds to his belief in civility, right through the worst disasters. The movie is a triumph for Cheadle—he never steps outside the character for emotional grandstanding or easy moralism.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

INSIDE DEEP THROAT
An excitable documentary, directed by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, about the creation of "Deep Throat." We follow that work through the stages of its writing and casting, both of which took hours to complete, and so to the more elaborate matter of its infamy. The star, Linda Lovelace, was no longer alive to be interviewed for the new film, but we hear from the director, a former hairdresser named Gerard Damiano, plus aging members of his crew, whose rants and ravings are twice as entertaining as anything in "Deep Throat" itself. Other contributors include such sexual magi as Dr. Ruth Westheimer, Camille Paglia, Erica Jong, and Helen Gurley Brown, all of whom lend weight and thrust to the documentary's contention that the erotic progress of America took a sharp upward turn in 1972. Certainly the legal decision to shut down the original movie and to prosecute its hapless leading man, Harry Reems, was a foolishly obvious guarantee of its semi-mythical status; at no point, however, do Bailey and Barbato make even the barest attempt to undercut that myth, and their efforts rise, with climactic absurdity, to a defense of free expression so rousing that they might as well be discussing the "Madame Bovary" trial. This is an HBO production, so expect a glossy finish and a hopped-up editing style very different from the livid grunginess in which Ms. Lovelace and her friends were bathed.—*Anthony Lane* (2/28/05) (42nd Street E Walk and Sunshine Cinema.)

NOBODY KNOWS
A long bad dream of a movie from the Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, who created the masterly "After Life." This new project takes its inspiration, loosely, from a true case of parental neglect. A young mother, with the voice of a doll, and a blank space where her sense of responsibility is meant to be, walks out on her four young children, leaving them to run their own lives. The film charts their slow decline, from the first manly efforts of twelve-year-old Akira (Yûya Yagira) to oversee a regular home to the draining away of essential supplies, and on to a final calamity. Like the children themselves, the film is immune to panic or complaint; events unfold in a patient procession of detail, and the camera's scrutiny of faces, feet, and ordinary objects is so obsessive that we seem to be following not so much a domestic drama as the progress of a haunting. Some view-

ers will never shake off the creepy dismay; others may find that the thickening air of isolation and implausibility leaves them nothing but numb. In Japanese.—*A.L.* (2/7/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
After the Ong Bak (a statue of Buddha) is stolen from a small village in Thailand by an art thief, a villager (Tony Jaa) takes on the mission to retrieve it. This martial-arts picture (it features a fighting style known as Muay Thai that looks extremely hard on the elbows and knees) follows the conventions of the genre: a gang of tough guys, a colorful ringleader, and girls with shrill voices all try to stop the hero from achieving his goal. What distinguishes this film from many others is the breathtaking talents of Jaa. Without the use of wirework, and with no regard for his own well-being, he flies through the air in feats of derring-do so striking that the director, Prachya Pinkaew, has the good sense to replay them in slow motion. In Thai.—*Bruce Diones* (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



Opening March 4, "Gunner Palace," a documentary about U.S. soldiers in Iraq.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE
One of the strongest of all American movies. Three Americans stranded in Mexico dig for gold and strike it rich—and the writer-director, John Huston, "looks on," as he says, and "lets them stew in their own juice." Humphrey Bogart is the paranoid tough guy, Fred C. Dobbs; Walter Huston is the toothless, shrewd old prospector; Tim Holt is a blunt, honest young man. With Alfonso Bedoya as a primitive bandit who makes one appreciate civilization, Robert Blake as a Mexican boy, and the director himself as the victim of Bogart's cadging. The first section (about twenty minutes), set in Tampico, with Bogart getting a haircut and fighting Barton MacLane in a bar, is so sure and lucid it's as good anything John Huston ever did—maybe even better than "The Maltese Falcon." But there he sustained the hard, economic style; here he doesn't. The picture is emotionally memorable, though—it has a powerful cumulative effect; when it's over you know you've seen something. (It was a box-office failure in 1948; apparently audiences resented Bogart's departure from the immensely popular "Casablanca" stereotype.)—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; March 6.)

TURTLES CAN FLY
The first impressive thing about Bahman Ghobadi's movie is that it got made at all. Not many directors, perhaps, would choose to film in the Kurdish encampments of northern Iraq, where life has been a mix of the ramshackle, the uncertain, and the downright lethal. The story is set in the days before the arrival of American forces in 2003—a cause of much rumor and hope. Satellite (Soran Ebrahim) is a boy of thirteen, but he has grown old before his time, and everybody in the village, adults as well as children, relies on his initiative. This is a world of losses: adults who have lost authority, and children who have lost parents and limbs. We watch Satellite as, true to his name, he brings television (and therefore news of war) to a clamoring community, and, far worse, we watch the teen-age Agrin (Avaz Latif) try, with awful persistence, to put a stop to her own suffering and to that of her illegitimate child. All this should be grim beyond bearing, yet the film treads carefully, and even lightly, through its tribulations. Never has childhood seemed more weirdly resilient, or less cute. In Kurdish.—*A.L.* (2/7/05) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNDERWORLD
Ben Hecht, who wrote the story and won an Oscar for it in 1927, objected to the way the director, Josef von Sternberg, embellished his characters with flamboyant touches, but the fusion of Hecht's hardboiled guys and molls and von Sternberg's otherworldly atmospherics makes this gangland tale of competing loyalties wonderfully entertaining. George Bancroft plays the crude but lionhearted bank robber Bull Weed; Evelyn Brent vamps her way through the role of his girl, Feathers McCoy; and Clive Brook achieves a glittering subtlety as Rolls Royce, the alcoholic lawyer Bull rescues from the gutter and makes his right-hand man. When Bull gets sent away for murdering his criminal rival, "Buck" Mulligan

STORY TIME FOR GROWN-UPS

SELECTED SHORTS

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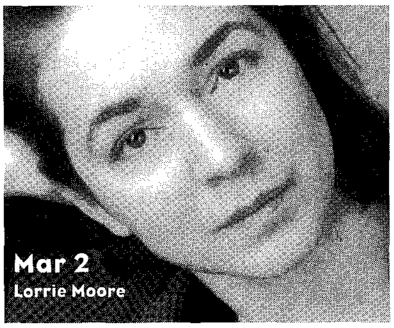
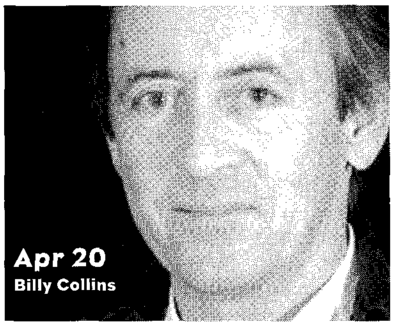


Mar 2: Women with Plans

Mar 23: We're on Our Way Home

April 27: Stories of the Islamic World

BILLY COLLINS LIVE



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(Fred Kohler), for assaulting Feathers, she and Rolls Royce must fight their romantic impulses. There are some perfect scenes, such as an underworld ball that ends with tuxedoed thugs trudging through drifts of party paper. All gangster films have stolen something from this one, whether it's the billboard telling the antiheroes "The City Is Yours" or the shoot-out that shatters the bricks of Bull Weed's hideout.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; March 2.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE AVIATOR (12/20 & 27/04)
Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
HEAD-ON
Angelika Film Center.
MILLION DOLLAR BABY (12/20 & 27/04)
Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 34th Street Theatre.
THE SEA INSIDE
First & 62nd Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
SIDEWAYS (10/25/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
MetroTwin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

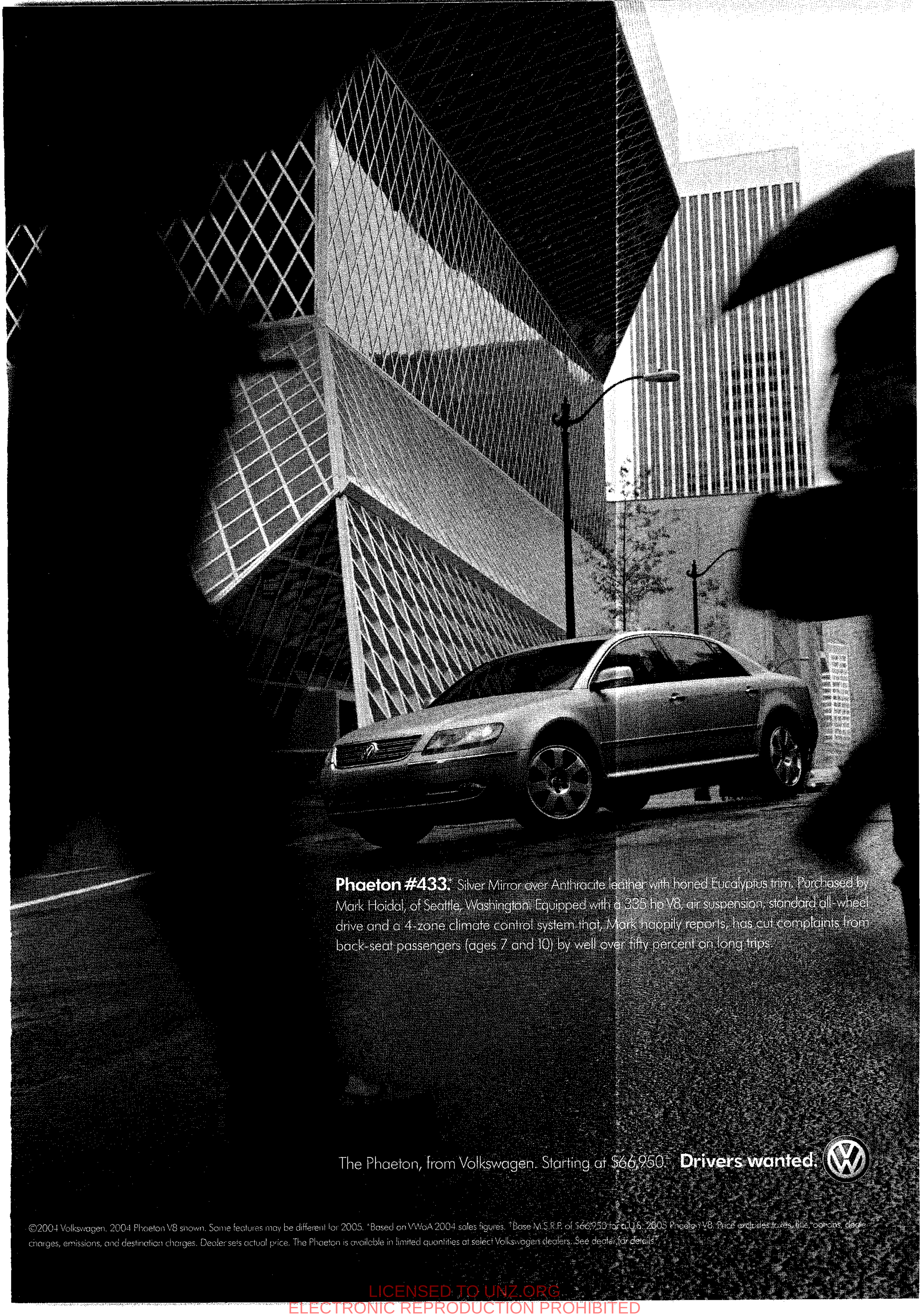
Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—March 2-3 at 9: "10 on Ten" (2004, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ March 3 at 7: "Ten" (2002, Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ March 4 at 8: A screening of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" (2001, Chris Columbus), with an unauthorized soundtrack by the artist Brad Neely. ♦ "Essential Cinema." March 5 at 7: "Orphée" (1950, Jean Cocteau; in French, no subtitles). ♦ March 5 at 9: "Le Testament d'Orpheé" (1960, Cocteau; in French, no subtitles). ♦ March 6 at 5:30: "The Gold Rush" (1925, Charles Chaplin). ♦ March 6 at 7:30: Films by Robert Breer (1952-72).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—March 2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Mystery of Picasso" (1956, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French). ♦ A Park Chan-Wook retrospective. All films are in Korean. March 3 at 7:30: "Oldboy" (2003). ♦ March 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: Shorts program. ♦ March 5 at 5 and 9: "Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance" (2002). ♦ March 6 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Joint Security Area" (2000). ♦ Horror films. March 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Hour of the Wolf" (1968, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ March 8 at 7:30: "Kwaidan" (1964, Masaki Kobayashi; in Japanese).

At Film Forum, Marco Tullio Giordana's epic drama "The Best of Youth."

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through March 3: "Oscar's First Year: Academy Award Winners 1927-28." March 2 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "Underworld" (†). ♦ March 2 at 2:35, 5:35, and 8:35: "The Unknown" (1927, Tod Browning). ♦ March 3 at 1:45, 5:30, and 9:15: "The Jazz Singer" (1927, Alan Crosland). ♦ March 3 at 3:30 and 7:15: "Tempest" (1928, Samuel Taylor). ♦ Through March 31: "Essential Westerns." March 4-5 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "The Searchers" (1956, John Ford). ♦ March 4-5 at 3:15 and 7:25: "Stagecoach" (1939, Ford). ♦ March 6 at 1:10, 5:20, and 9:30: "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (†). ♦ March 6 at 3:30 and 7:40: "Colorado Territory" (1949, Raoul Walsh). ♦ March 7 at 1, 3:50, 6:40, and 9:30: "Tumbleweeds" (1925, King Baggot). ♦ March 7 at 2:40, 5:30, and 8:20: "The Great K & A Train Robbery" (1926, Lewis Seiler). ♦ March 8 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50: "3:10 to Yuma" (1959, Delmer Daves). ♦ March 8 at 2:50, 6:15, and 9:40: "The Tall T" (1957, Budd Boetticher).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through April 26: "Paris Nights." March 8 at 12:30 and 7: "La Chienne" (†). ♦ March 8 at 4: "L'Atalante" (1934, Jean Vigo; in French).
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—March 2 at 6 and March 5 at 5: "George Stevens: D-Day to Berlin" (1994, George Stevens, Jr.). ♦ March 2 at 6: "Bad Santa" (2003, Terry Zwigoff). ♦ March 2 at 7:15: "George Stevens: A Filmmaker's Journey" (1985, Stevens, Jr.). ♦ March 2 at 8: A conversation with Robert Zemeckis and William Broyles. ♦ March 3 at 5: "Shane" (1953, George Stevens). ♦ March 3 at 5:30: "Padre Padrone" (1977, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani; in Italian). ♦ March 3 at 7:30, March 4 at 8:15, March 5-6 at 2, and March 7 at 5:30: "Whisky" (2003, Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll; in Spanish). ♦ March 3 at 8:30 and March 6 at 5: "Vivacious Lady" (1938, Stevens). ♦ March 4 at 6: "Daughter of Keltoum" (2001, Mehdi Charef; in Arabic and French). ♦ March 4 at 8: "The More the Merrier" (1943, Stevens). ♦ March 5 at 2: "I Remember Mama" (1948, Stevens). ♦ March 5 at 5:30: "Kabala" (2002, Assane Kouyaté; in Bambara). ♦ March 5 at 7:30: "Scream" (1996, Wes Craven). ♦ March 5 at 8: "Fuse" (2003, Pjer Zalica; in Bosnian / Serbo-Croatian). ♦ March 6 at 2: "The Talk of the Town" (1942, Stevens). ♦ March 6 at 5: "Uniform" (2004, Diao Yinan; in Mandarin). ♦ March 7 at 7: "What's a Human Anyway?" (2004, Reha Erdem).
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Asian CineVision." March 4 at 7:30: "Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity" (2002, Mina Shum; in English and Cantonese). ♦ Through March 6: "Digital Masters." March 5 at 2: "Ten" (2002, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ March 5 at 4: "Corpus Callosum" (2002, Michael Snow). ♦ March 6 at 2: "The Idiots" (1998, Lars Von Trier; in Danish). ♦ March 6 at 4:30: "28 Days Later" (2002, Danny Boyle). ♦ Repertory nights. March 5-6 at 6:30: "The Third Man" (1949, Carol Reed). ♦ Peter Sellers films. March 6 at noon: "The Mouse That Roared" (1959, Jack Arnold).
SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. March 4-5: "Donnie Darko: The Director's Cut" (2004, Richard Kelly).
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—March 5-6: The New York International Children's Film Festival.
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March 10: "Take No Prisoners: The Bold Vision of Kira Muratova." All films are in Russian. March 2 at 3:30 and 7:15 and March 5 at 4:15: "Getting to Know the Big, Wide World" (1978). ♦ March 2 at 5:15: "Brief Encounters" (1967). ♦ March 2 at 9: "Long Farewells" (1971). ♦ March 3 at 3:30 and March 6 at 2: "The Aesthetic Syndrome" (1989). ♦ March 5 at 2, March 7 at 1:30, and March 8 at 3:45: "Passions" (1994). ♦ March 5 at 6, March 7 at 3:45, and March 8 at 1:30 and 9: "Three Stories" (1997). ♦ March 5 at 8:15 and March 6 at 5: "Chekhov's Motives" (2002). ♦ March 6 at 7:20: "The Tuner" (2004). ♦ Special event. March 4 at 6:30 and 9:30: "Blackmail" (1929, Alfred Hitchcock), with live accompaniment by the Alloy Orchestra.



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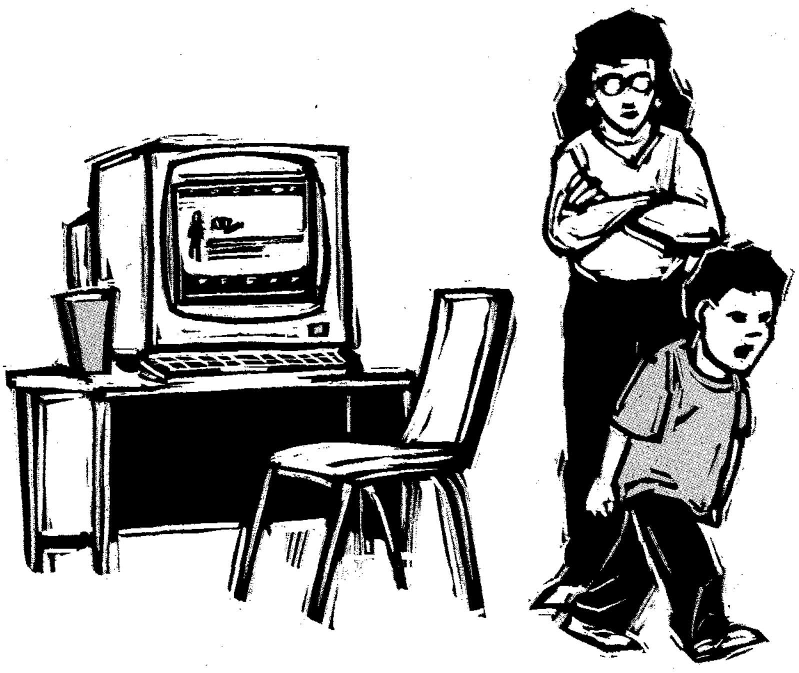
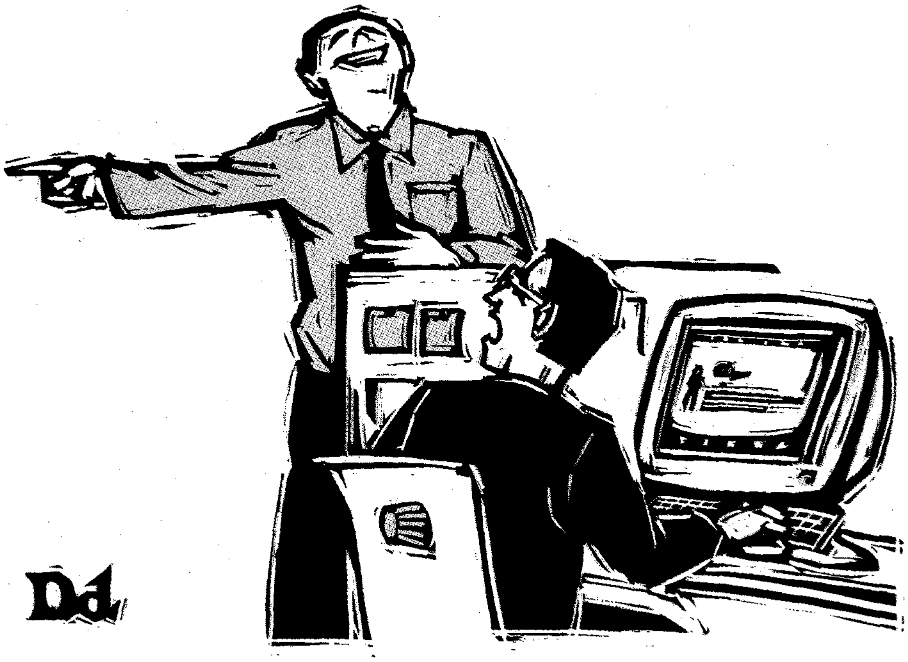
The FUNNY PAGES



"On 'Ask Jeeves,' I don't have to say 'please'!"



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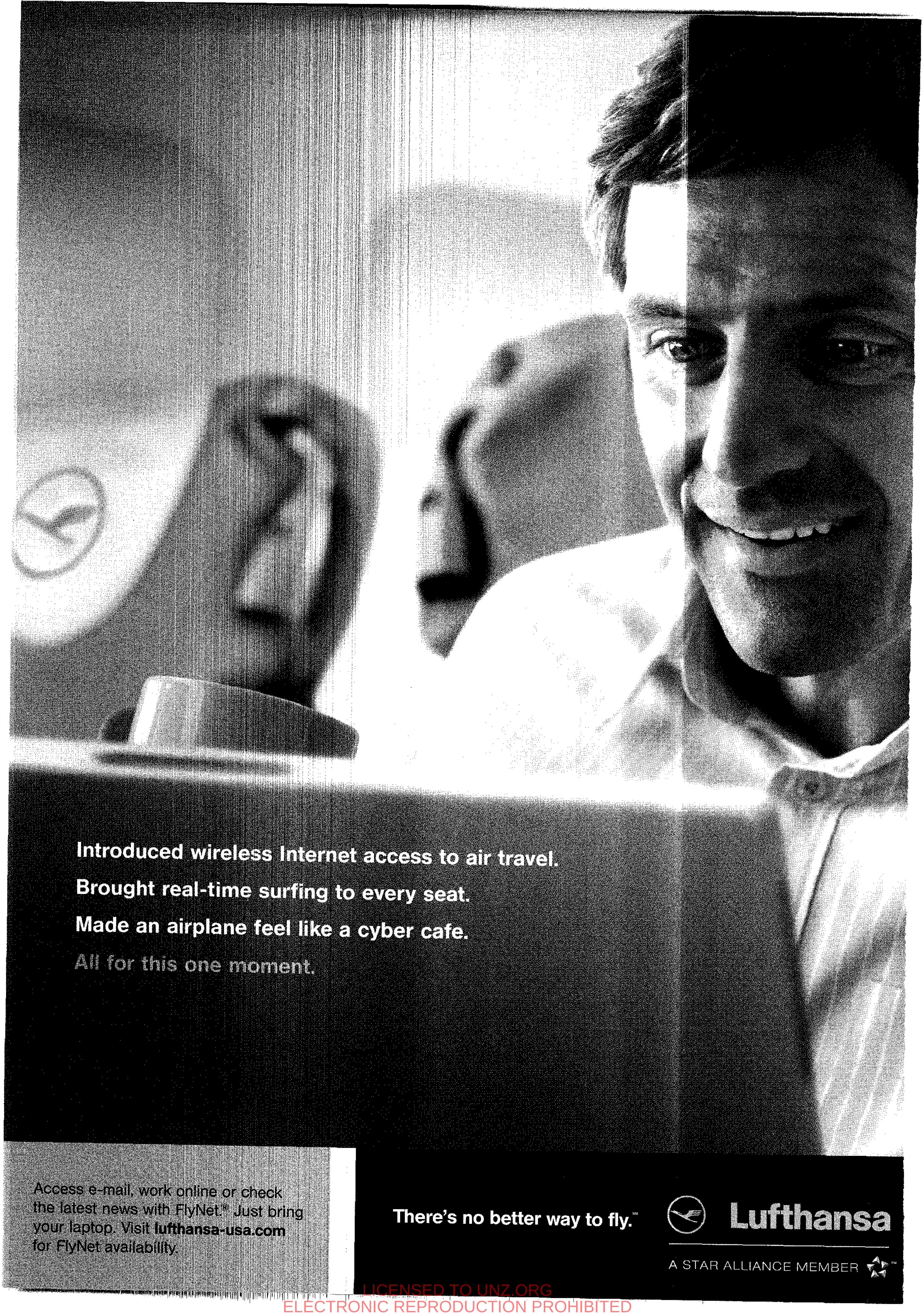

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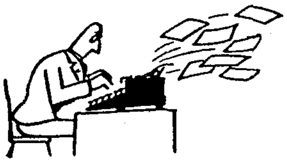
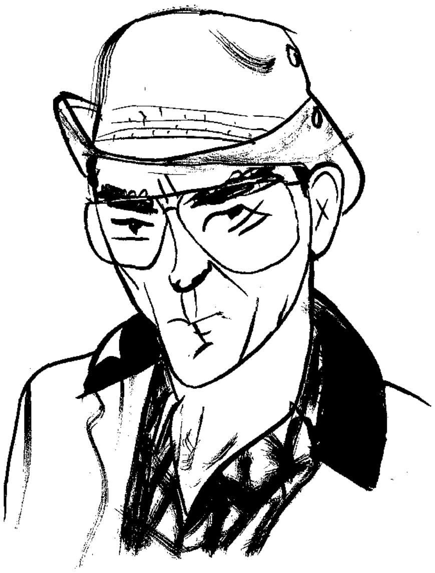


Hunter S. Thompson, who killed himself last week in his house in Woody Creek, near Aspen, Colorado, was a high-strung, thin-skinned, programmatically dissipated workaholic, inveterately suspicious of authority, perpetually worried that his best days were behind him, and unable to deal with the attention and success that he scrambled and sweated for many years to achieve. In other words, he was a magazine writer. And although the drugs and the guns and the whole paranoid "gonzo" routine long ago became tiresome and embarrassing—they were pretty embarrassing from the start, actually—the news of his death hit a nerve. He was one of the last of the true believers.

There is a lot of edge in the Thompson style, and this gets him compared with people like Lenny Bruce and H. L. Mencken, indignant savagers of bourgeois self-satisfaction. He also seems, by virtue of the "outlaw" accoutrements, to belong to the tradition in American writing that includes William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, and Henry Miller. But his true model and hero was F. Scott Fitzgerald. He used to type out pages from "The Great Gatsby," just to get the feeling, he said, of what it was like to write that way, and Fitzgerald's novel was continually on his mind while he was working on "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," which was published, after a prolonged and agonizing compositional nightmare, in 1972. That book was supposed to be called "The Death of the American Dream," a portentous age-of-Aquarius cliché that won Thompson a nice advance but that he naturally came to consider, as he sat wretchedly before his typewriter night after night, a millstone around his neck. Still, it pleased him to remember that Fitzgerald had once thought of calling "Gatsby" "The Death of the Red White and Blue."

Thompson emerged on the scene in the late nineteen-sixties. His first book, on the Hell's Angels (which originated as an article in *The Nation* in 1965), was published in 1967, when he was thirty, after a career path in journalism that resembled a trip through a pinball machine. The book brought Thompson to the attention of the mainstream press, and he was quick to squander the opportunity. Commissioned by *Playboy* to produce a profile of the Olympic skier Jean-Claude Killy, he handed in a lengthy piece in which he suggested that, "on balance, it seems unfair to dismiss him as a witless greedhead, despite all the evidence." *Playboy* killed it. "This is our last adventure with H. Thompson," one editor wrote. But Thompson found a home in what used to be called the alternative media—*Ramparts*, *Scanlan's Monthly* (which bought the Killy profile), and *Rolling Stone*. It was in *Scanlan's* that, in 1970, he published "The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved," and gonzo journalism was born.

Gonzo was a late flower on the shrub that was the New Journalism, the literary and (often) first-person style of reportage associated with magazines such as Harold Hayes's *Esquire* and Willie Morris's *Harper's*, and with writers such as Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, and Joan Didion, all of whom were well established by 1970. The obsession with violence and chemically induced dementia in Thompson's writing gave it a kind of post-Altamont,



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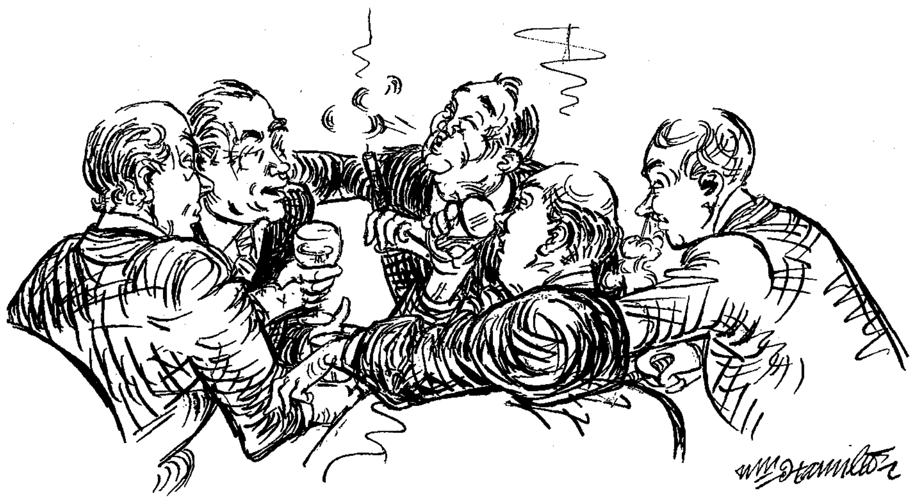


"This just might be the greatest period of privatization since feudalism."

• •

Manson-family, death-of-the-sixties aura, and made him a favorite not of the protest marchers and flower children of the sixties but of the youth of the burned-out decade that followed. In fact, Thompson despised the Hell's Angels—he calls them "mutants" and "losers" in his book—and he had little patience for the hippies, either. His heart was in a lost world—the world of the Haight-Ashbury in 1964, San Francisco before the hippies and the hustlers and the media discovered it and ruined it. By 1966, he thought, that world was dead, and the rest of his career was a kind of bitter elegy for it. It was, forever, his lost paradise, the green light at the end of the dock. The pill-popping gun enthusiast of Woody Creek was a romantic to the last degree.

"To live outside the law, you must be honest." Thompson, like a lot of people in the sixties and seventies, interpreted Dylan's famous apothegm to mean that in order to be honest you must live outside the law. By the time the fallacy in this reading became obvious, his persona, thanks in part to the Uncle Duke figure in Garry Trudeau's comic strip, but largely because of his own efforts, was engraved in pop-culture stone. It's an occupational hazard: if you construct a career raging against the system, you can't stop raging just because the system has accepted you, or has ceased to care or to pay attention. The anger needs someplace to go. At its best, in the Nixon era, Thompson's anger, in writing, was a beautiful thing, fearless and funny and, after all, not wrong about the shabbiness and hypocrisy of American officialdom. It belonged to a time when journalists believed that fearlessness and humor and honesty could make a difference; and it's sad to be reminded that the time in which such a faith was possible has probably passed.

—*Louis Menand*

ON TOUR
DR. JUICE

Behold the Chemist, Jose Canseco: former American League M.V.P., Madonna's onetime "bat boy," best-selling author, peerless narcissist. He is forty, and retired from baseball, although you wouldn't know it to look at his arms and chest, still oversized and threatening the seams on his tight-fitting shirt. He is very tan, as always, his hair slick, short on the sides and long—not quite a mullet—in the back. He's got his shades on. If he must say so, he looks *good.*

Canseco's chemistry expertise, of course, involves steroids—that persistent thorn in baseball's hide—and, while some of the players he has depicted as dopers are now beginning spring training, dogged by reporters, Jose is happily out on book tour, promoting "Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big," which, owing to the timing, the naming of names, and perhaps those dashing looks, just débuted at No. 1 on the *Times* nonfiction chart. Last week, he dropped by the Rockefeller Center Barnes & Noble to sign copies, and was greeted by hundreds of fans. Should the Yankees' Jason Giambi (once "the most obvious juicer in the game," according to Canseco) falter at the start of this coming season, he might consider the alternate path of his old teammate "Josey."

Evidently, a great many baseball fans remain confused about where Canseco stands on the steroid issue. Two middle-school health teachers from Long Island, for instance, were at the front of the line. One had tried using his teacher's discount card when paying for the book (three copies), and was denied. ("They said it has to be school-related," he recalled. "Well, I'm a health teacher!")

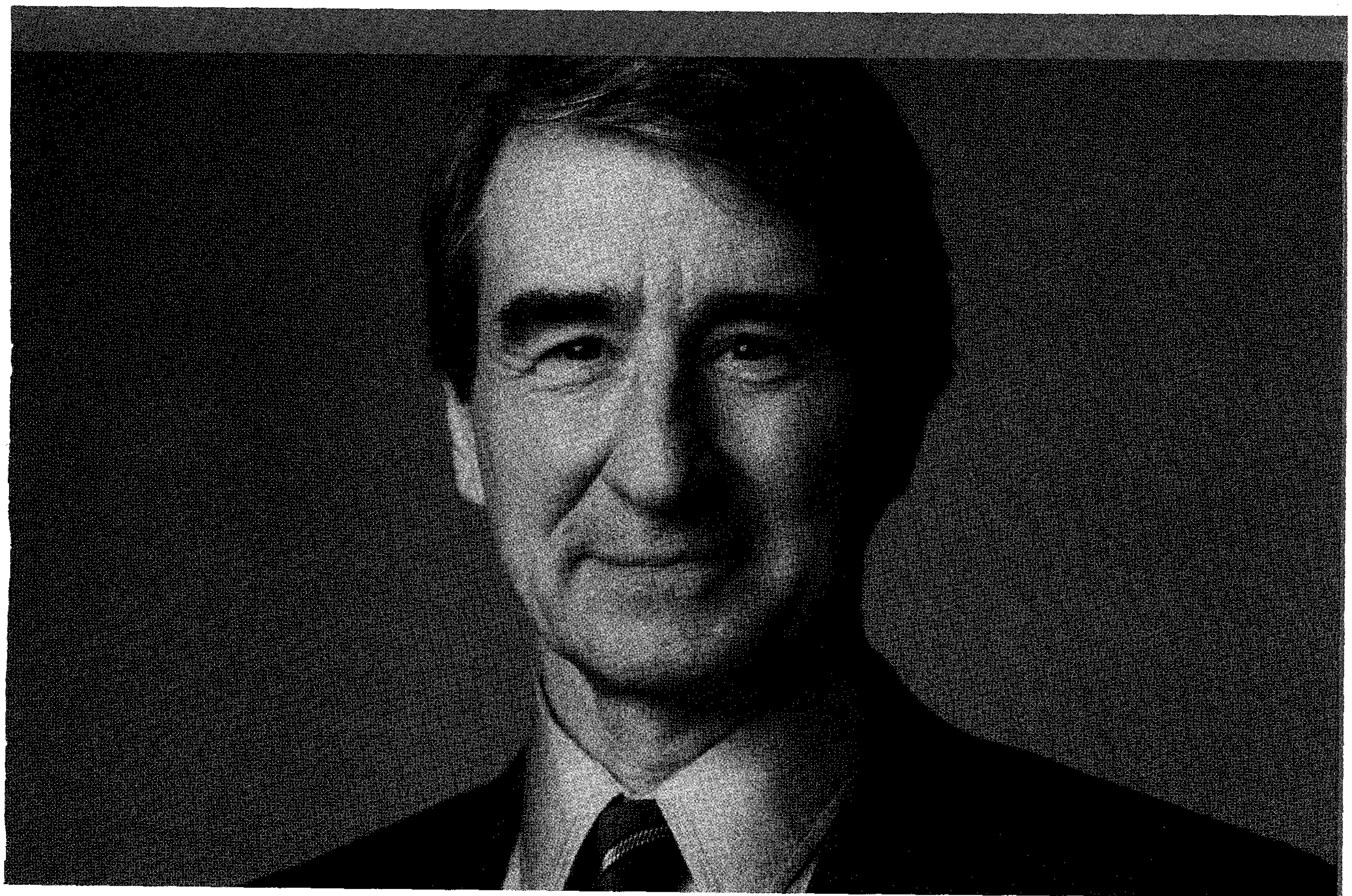
Let's be clear: Jose Canseco wants more steroid use in baseball (and elsewhere, for that matter), not less. In "Juiced," he writes, "What I've learned is that there is a way to stop the aging process, or at least slow it down by 90 percent. If you stick with a program of good nutrition and a consistent approach to fitness, and know the right mix of steroids and growth hormone to take, you should be the same at fifty years old as you are at thirty."

Inside the bookstore, the throngs paid their respects. "Good luck to you," one pale, gray-haired man said. "I think you're doing something important, especially for the young people."

"I'm sure you tell the truth—that's all I have to say," another man shouted.

"You should read it first," Canseco replied, cautiously. (Page 3: "To all my critics, to everyone who wants to turn this into a debate about me, Jose Canseco, let me quote my favorite actor—besides Arnold Schwarzenegger, that is—and say: You can't *handle* the truth.")

To be sure, "Juiced" has some credibility issues. Several reviewers, including one, from the Los Angeles *Times,* who called it "the worst sports book so far in three centuries," have noted a lack of truth in some of the game-by-game anecdotes. (This puts "Juiced" in the company of pretty much every sports



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memoir ever published.) But, unlike the former Yankees pitcher David Wells, who claimed that he was "misquoted" in his own autobiography, Canseco is standing behind his revelations of widespread performance enhancement. In between signings, he even quietly confirmed the name of his ghostwriter, the former San Francisco *Chronicle* reporter Steve Kettmann, who has previously alluded to steroid use by players such as Giambi and Mark McGwire under his own byline.

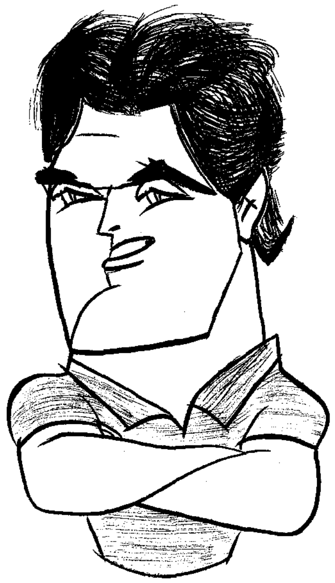
Moving along. "Can I call you Dr. Canseco?" one young man asked.

"I'm not technically a doctor," Canseco said. (Page 6: "Growth hormone? You can use that all year round. Same thing with your Equipoise, your Winstrols, your Decas. . . . But something like Anadrol, and some high dosages of testosterone—those have to be moderated, taken more selectively.")

"Could you sign it 'Dr. Juice?' "

"No."

Somewhere around the four-hundredth book, Canseco began to tire, and his lawyer, Robert Saunooke, gestured to a reporter who'd been hovering behind the signing desk. "Hey, *New Yorker* guy," Saunooke said. "Lemme coach you. You want to interview Jose, you got to ask him questions different than what he's been asked already. Ask about his family life. Ask him if there's other people in baseball who have ridden his coattails—a fair-weather-friend kind of thing."



Jose Canseco

O.K., Jose, how's your family enjoying the publicity? "I think they're handling it great. My daughter's eight years old, she's in school, so it's not affecting her so much right now."

How about fair-weather friends? "Oh, absolutely. When you're on top, making millions . . ."

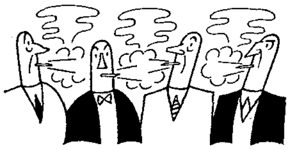
He confessed that all the signing was taking its toll. "After a while, it wreaks havoc on your arms," he said.

Might not steroids help with the pain? "I don't take illegal steroids," he said, slowly, carefully. "That's not saying I might not in the future."

—*Ben McGrath*

AWARDS SEASON

THE POLLIES



Depending on whom you ask, the Pollie Awards, which the American Association of Political Consultants has been handing out since 1985, are either the Oscars or the Golden Globes of the campaign industry. On a recent Saturday night, about three hundred and fifty of the profession's finest—media strategists, direct-mail coördinators, opposition-research gurus—turned up at the Washington, D.C., Park Hyatt for the presentation of this year's honors. During a three-and-a-half-hour ceremony, operatives from both sides of the aisle clapped, whistled, and yelled "Whoo!" as awards were conferred for outstanding achievement in a broad range of categories, from best Use of E-Mail/Viral Marketing (New Media Communications, for Bush-Cheney '04) to best Yard/Outdoor Sign (Precision Politics, for "Dr. Ramirez for Hospital Board").

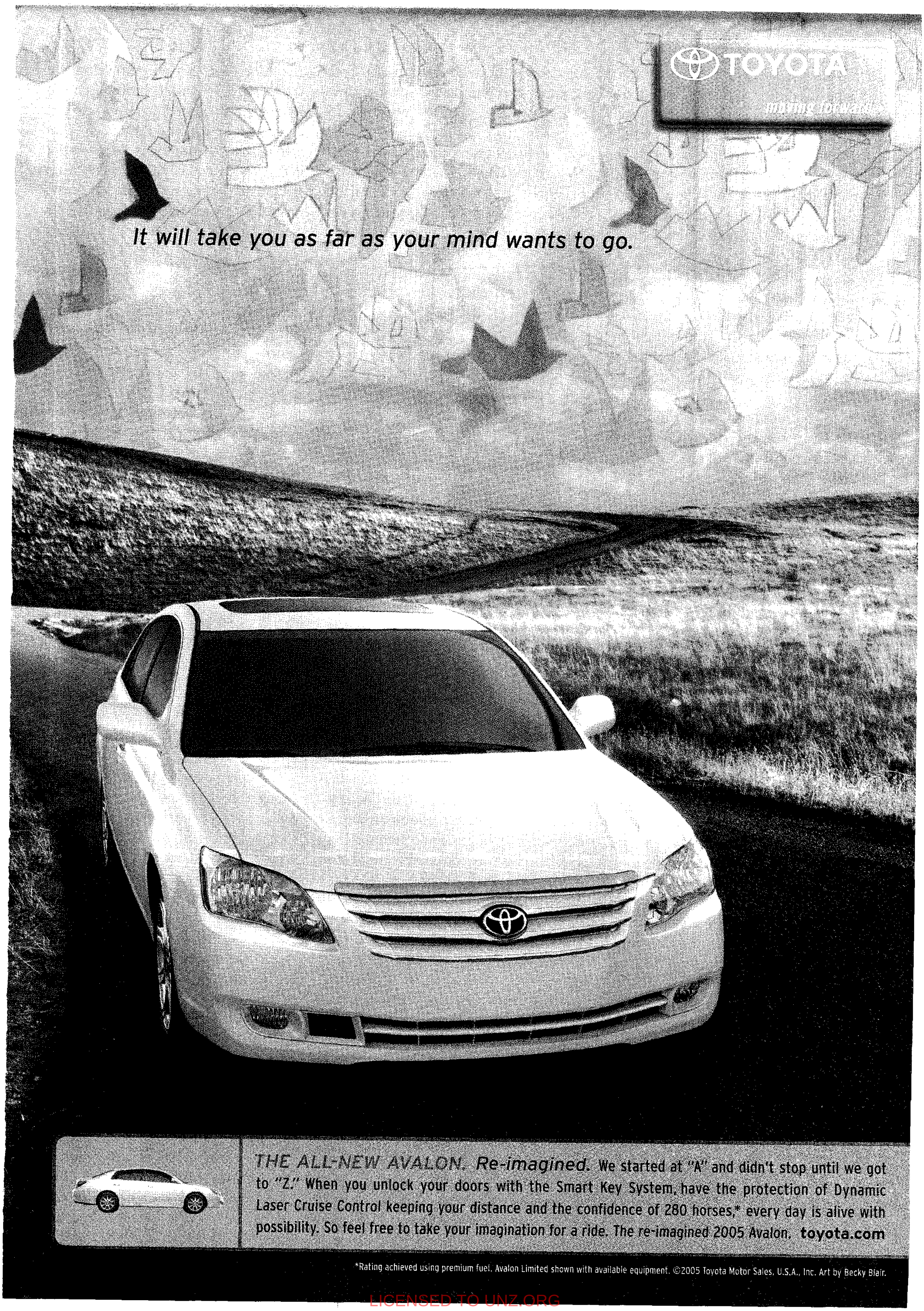
The evening began with a cocktail reception ("black tie optional"), sponsored by the National Rifle Association. Angela Brightman, from the Lukens Company, a direct-mail firm that won a Pollie for a form letter that appeared to be a handwritten note from the Republican Senate candidate John Thune, had on a black cocktail dress, though she said that, in her amateur capacity as a seat filler at the Emmy Awards, she always wears a ballgown.

There seemed to be general agreement that the value of winning a Pollie can be measured more in prestige than in dollars and cents. Nobody mentioned what an honor it was just to be nominated. There are no nominations: for between a hundred and ten and a hundred and seventy-five dollars a shot, consultants may enter as many examples of their work as they choose. "One of the ways to make money off this is to keep expanding the number of categories," Bill Hillsman, the adman behind the Paul Wellstone, Jesse Ventura, and Ralph Nader (2000) campaigns, said. "You know, Best Handbill for a Republican Candidate for Dogcatcher, or whatever."

This year, there were more than a hundred and thirty categories (a record), and the judges awarded Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Honorable Mention prizes—sometimes more than one of each—in nearly every category. This made it impractical to read the names of every winner, much less hand each one a trophy. Acceptance speeches were out of the question. Instead, during dinner, a pre-recorded male voice announced the categories ("And now the Pollie Awards for automated phone calls") and the winners' names flashed by on large screens at the front of the ballroom, accompanied by easy-listening saxophone music.

Entertainment was provided by the Capitol Steps, a musical-comedy-sketch troupe of current and former congressional staffers, who performed ripped-from-the-headlines spoofs of Rodgers and Hammerstein ("There Is Nothing Like Ukraine") and the Beach Boys ("Help Rwanda"). But Tom Edmonds, the winner of this year's Lifetime Achievement Award (past recipients include Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes), got the biggest laugh of the evening. Edmonds, a conservative strategist, told the crowd, "I used to do ads for C. B. Fleet enemas and Massengill douches, so making the transition to political advertising wasn't particularly difficult."

As the proceedings wore on, both the right and the left racked up their share of trophies. The Republicans, though, swept most of the major television awards. The Stevens & Schriefer Group, for instance, was a co-winner in the Candidate: Presidential General Election category, for its thirty-second ad "Windsurfing," the gist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of which was that John Kerry changed his position on issues a lot. In the 527 category, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's "Ravaged" was edged out for first place by Progress for America Voter Fund's "Ashley's Story," which featured a snapshot of President Bush hugging a sixteen-year-old girl whose mother was killed on September 11th, and the memorable line "He's the most powerful man in the world, and all he wants to do is make sure I'm safe." Larry McCarthy, whose firm made the ad, said later, "I was gratified to learn that the Kerry people thought the spot was unusually powerful, and that Shrum credited it with winning Ohio for Bush."

In the hotel's bar after dinner, the mood was upbeat—nearly everyone there seemed to have got at least one Pollie—and nonpartisan. Rebecca Reno, whose husband runs a Democratic firm that had won nine awards, spotted some women from a Republican firm that had won seventeen, and shouted, "Hey, it's my Rick Santorum people!"

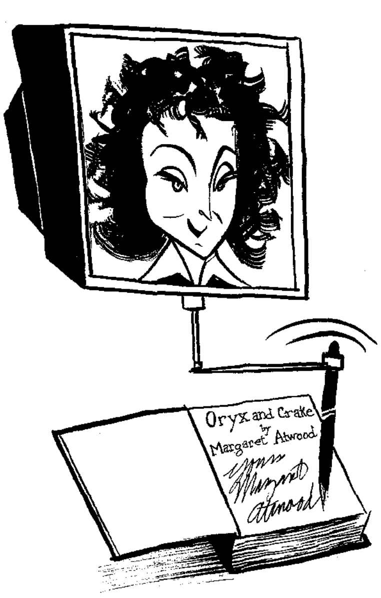
The most coveted Pollie Award, Campaign Manager of the Year, went to Ken Mehlman, of Bush-Cheney '04, who, because of a scheduling conflict, had had to accept the honor at a kick-off reception the night before. In an eight-and-a-half-minute speech, Mehlman decried the stereotype of political consultants as "hacks smoking cigars." By adopting the practices of corporate America, he said, the industry has evolved. "The old days, when our profession was a bunch of guys shooting the breeze in the back room and going with their gut, based on years of politics, is over," Mehlman said. "And the days when we are a true profession is here."

—*Adam Green*

GIZMOS
TWO PENS

Until now, man's relationship with the pen has been relatively straightforward. Few people stopped to wonder whether the "I" who scribbles the "Sorry I backed into your new car" note is separate, in some important ontological way, from the interface of ballpoint and scratch pad. But those carefree days have gone the way of cursive script.

The first sign of change surfaced in December, when it was revealed that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had used an Autopen to simulate his signature on official condolence letters. Responding to criticism, he issued a written statement expressing contrition—"I have directed that in the future I sign each letter"—which only made it sound as if the Autopen were still on the job. Then Margaret Atwood, the Canadian novelist, announced that she had invented a device that allows an author to remain at home while autographing books in faraway bookstores—a solution to the perennial problem of highbrow writers being mobbed by screaming fans. Her contraption is a kind of two-way video hookup with a robotic pen arm. An author can sit at the kitchen table in her pajamas and make a personalized inscription on an electronic screen, while, in a distant mall, the robotic pen replicates the message on the title page of a fan's propped-up book. Atwood came up with the idea last spring, during an expensive and exhausting three-week publicity tour for her novel "Oryx and Crake." She says that the invention, which will be manufactured by a new company called Unotchit ("You no touch it"), will increase both the safety of the writer-reader interaction—"My germs and my bio-material won't be in the same place as your germs and your bio-material"—and its profundity: "I'm more likely to be gazing deeply into your eyes as I'm signing on the screen." And she insists that there will be no appreciable lessening of an autograph's authenticity, because writing is already only a distant cousin of thought. "The mind is the device that is thinking out the signature," she said. "The hand is the extension of the mind, and the pen is the extension of the hand—so the pen is at two removes from the author's mind already. This thing is just another remove."



Margaret Atwood

The other day, in a glitzy ceremony at the Time Warner Center, in Columbus Circle, the LeapFrog company introduced another new pen, called FLY, that is so far removed from an author's mind that it actually talks back to it. FLY, which has the shape and heft of an agribusiness-size carrot, is billed as a "pentop computer." If you write a word in English on special FLY paper, the pen can announce its definition in an electronic voice or translate the word into Spanish. If you use the pen to draw a calculator and then touch the numbers and functions, you can add and multiply. If you draw a piano keyboard, you can tap the keys and play Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," as LeapFrog's president, Jerry Perez, did at the launch ceremony, to appreciative applause.

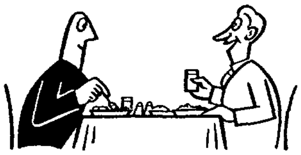
The pen, which will be marketed to young teen-agers this fall for ninety-nine dollars, was extensively tweaked by a focus group of fifty kids known as the Quantum Team, six of whom were on hand to demonstrate additional FLY functions. "Skratch" allows you to sample and mix electronic music by touching FLY to a turntable pad. "Dig it!" the pen says, sounding remarkably like Vanilla Ice. "That's ill, yo!" A journal-keeping program called "Dear Me Diary" was illustrated by two appropriately bored-seeming girls who lay on a bed, pens in hand, with their feet kicking idly. If you're a novice journal writer and you don't know quite how to begin spilling your invidious feelings about Josh and Nicole, you touch a pouty-faced-girl icon on the special FLY diary and the pen issues a catfight screech, followed by a Lindsay Lohan-ish voice prompt: "What are you so jealous about?" If Josh smiled at you in pre-algebra, you touch an icon covered with tiny hearts, which elicits a protracted smooch sound followed by "Ooh—dish alert! What's going on?"

After the festivities, Jim Marggraff, the inventor of FLY, said, "We see applications where FLY will help you with grammar and composition and teach you about story writing." Glancing dubiously at a reporter's writing instrument, a ratty blue Paper Mate that lacked an optical sensor, character-recognition software, or even a seventy-thousand-word phoneme-to-speech engine, he added, "Why would you not want to have a pen that adds value to the words you're writing?"

Margaret Atwood also plans to launch her invention this fall, but she is still working out the kinks on various lower-order linguistic issues that will be child's play for FLY. "We've just built a clunky, Model A prototype of the machine, and we don't have a name for it yet," she said. "Nor do we have a name for the remote-pen object. But I think we could actually, on reflection, call it a pen."

—*Tad Friend*

SUMATRA POSTCARD
OUR MAN IN MEDAN



Jalan Wali Kota is a fashionable street in what had been until the past couple of months a rather unfashionable city: Medan, Indonesia. It may be the biggest city on Sumatra and home to two and a half million people, but, aside from the Palace of the Sultan of Deli and a first-rate orangutan preserve three hours away, Medan has never been much of a draw, and the American diplomatic office on Jalan Wali Kota has been the quintessence of a sleepy outpost. Until, that is, the biggest natural disaster in living memory struck Sumatra's western coast and Medan became the headquarters of the international relief effort. Suddenly, Paul Berg, the rather startled American representative, finds himself one of the world's premier go-to guys.

Berg had a visitor to dinner the other night in the Dutch Colonial house that is all that remains of the once grand American Consulate here. He is fifty-one and quite literally red, white, and blue: ruddy skin, bright-white hair and mustache, blue eyes. He emerged in a Hawaiian-print shirt, and with a heavy silver chain around his neck, and apologized for the meanness of the surroundings. "The United States had a consulate here from independence, in 1949, until the nineteen-nineties, when suddenly it had to open embassies all over the former Soviet Union," he said. "The consulate was closed, and all the beautiful buildings were sold off except this one, the consul-general's house, which was kept as a warehouse to store all the furniture in. Then somebody realized that there are forty-five million people in Sumatra, that three U.S. oil companies operate here, that there's the conflict in Aceh—that there ought to be a consulate here." He sat at one end of a long table as Tony Bennett began singing from the stereo and a lithe young man served a rich broth seasoned with scallions and Parmesan cheese. "This is officially the Medan office of the U.S. Embassy, Jakarta, and I am, officially, here two weeks each month and two weeks in Jakarta." He paused, tasted his soup, and breezed through stories of what sounded like a fun career: Bombay, Brussels, Washington, Rome, Mexico City, Hanoi, Bogotá, and now Medan. He'd earned an entire career's pay in the past few weeks, coördinating aid, greeting visiting congressmen, and being the face of the United States in Sumatra.

On December 26th, the only clues Berg had that an earthquake had occurred were the key clattering in the lock to his bedroom door and what he described as "a mini-tsunami" in the murky, disused swimming pool out back. Later that morning, a call came from the embassy in Jakarta that "something had happened" on the coast. Berg flew to Banda Aceh, where he has many friends. " 'My wife is dead,' they'd say, or, 'I lost my two children.' It's the first thing people say. It's what social relations are in Banda Aceh. Everybody has lost someone."

The young man, whose name was Hoa, replaced the soup bowls with a salad of seasoned cabbage. Berg spoke to him in Vietnamese. "Hoa joined me in Hanoi and was a fabulous cook," Berg said. "There was a Brooklyn Club there, of people from Brooklyn, and I had them all over for a Brooklyn-food night. Hoa made bagels, pierogi, sausage-and-peppers, and Junior's cheesecake. They loved it. I took him with me to Bogotá, but first I brought him to New York, because I wanted him to go to really good restaurants. We went to one outstanding restaurant after another, and of course we'd drink wine with every course, and I'd just get sleepy, but he, being younger, would get sharper and more critical. I'm sure people wondered who that sleepy old man and that talkative young man were." A visa for Hoa was never a problem, Berg said. "Traditionally, diplomatic courtesy allows you to bring one servant with you."

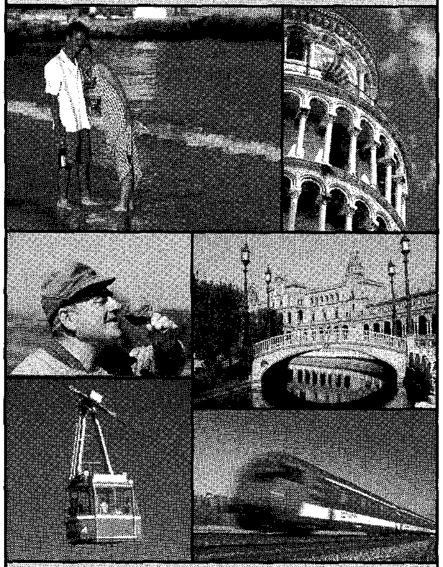
Hoa next set down a plate of roast duck in a rich, anise-scented sauce. "I love being a diplomat, but I particularly love being an American diplomat," Berg said. "Americans invented the diplomacy of mutual interests. Classical European diplomacy is based on the zero-sum game: for me to gain something, you have to lose. But the knack for mutual interest springs naturally from the American temperament, I think. This goes all the way back to Benjamin Franklin." Berg has never minded having to defend policies with which he personally disagrees. "That is the profession," he said.

Gone was the duck, and in came chicken braised in caramelized onion and garlic, on a bed of crunchy French-cut green beans. "Yes," Berg said, "I do eat like this every day." He said that the United States relief effort has been a huge diplomatic success. Hoa cleared the chicken and served sections of grapefruit, to be dipped in a mixture of salt and powdered chili. "The size and energy of the American response to the tsunami really resonated with the Indonesians," Berg said. "They're emotional and subjective, like us."

Walking out toward the gate after dinner, he said that the State Department has been considering elevating the Medan office to a full consulate, and that the other day both Houses of Congress passed a resolution asking it to do so. "Soon, this will be the American Consulate in Medan, and I, for the first time in my career, will be consul-general."

—*Dan Baum*

What will you do with your free day in Europe?



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PERSONAL HISTORY

THE PAMUK APARTMENTS

Growing up among the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

BY ORHAN PAMUK

My mother, my father, my older brother, my father's mother, my uncles, and my aunts—we all lived on different floors of the same five-story apartment house. Until the year before I was born, the different branches of the family had (like so many large Ottoman families) lived together in a large stone mansion. In 1951, they rented it out to a private elementary school and built the modern structure that became our home on the empty lot next door; on the façade, in keeping with the custom of the time, they proudly put up a plaque that said "Pamuk Apt." We lived on the fourth floor, but I had the run of the entire building from the time I was old enough to climb off my mother's lap. On each floor, there was at least one piano. When my last bachelor uncle put his newspaper down long enough to get married, and his new wife moved into the first-floor apartment, from which she would spend the next half century gazing out the window, she brought her piano with her. No one ever played this one or any of the others.

In each apartment, there was also a locked glass cabinet displaying Chinese porcelains, teacups, silver sets, sugar bowls, snuffboxes, crystal glasses, rosewater pitchers, plates, and censers, which no one ever touched, although among them I sometimes found hiding places for miniature cars. There were unused desks inlaid with mother-of-pearl, turban shelves on which there were no turbans, and Japanese and Art Nouveau screens behind which nothing was hidden. There, in the library, gathering dust behind the glass, were my uncle's medical books: in the twenty years since he'd immigrated to America, no one had touched them. To my childish mind, these rooms were furnished not for the living but for the dead.

If my grandmother thought we weren't sitting properly on her silver-threaded chairs, she would bring us to attention: "Sit up straight!" Sitting rooms were not places where you could hope to sit comfortably; they were little museums designed to demonstrate to a hypothetical visitor that the householders had been Westernized. A person who was not fasting during Ramadan would perhaps suffer fewer pangs of conscience among these glass cupboards and dead pianos than he would if he were still sitting cross-legged in a room full of cushions and divans. Although everyone knew that Westernization meant freedom from the laws of Islam, no one was quite sure what else it was good for. So it was not just in the affluent homes of Istanbul that you found these haphazard and gloomy (but sometimes also poetic) displays of Western influence; it was all over Turkey. Only with the arrival of television, in the nineteen-seventies, did they go out of fashion. Once people discovered how pleasurable it was to sit together to watch the evening news, their sitting rooms changed from little museums into little cinemas—although you still hear of old families that put their televisions in their central hallways, opening their sitting rooms only for holidays or special guests.

If anyone asked, my grandmother would say that she was in favor of Atatürk's Westernizing project, but in fact—and in this she was like everyone else in the city—neither the East nor the West interested her. Now she seldom left the house, but, after becoming engaged to my grandfather, and before marrying him, she did something that was rather brave in Istanbul in 1917: she went out with him to a restaurant. Because they were sitting opposite each other at a table, and because they were served drinks, I like to imagine they were in a restaurant café in Pera, which, at that time, was a mostly Christian neighborhood. When my grandfather asked her what she'd like to drink (meaning tea or lemonade), she, thinking he was offering her something stronger, answered him harshly: "I'll have you know, sir, that I never touch alcohol."

Forty years later, if she got a bit merry on the glass of beer that she allowed herself at our family dinners on New Year's Day, someone would always repeat this story, and she would let out a large, embarrassed laugh. If it was an ordinary day, and she was in her usual chair in her sitting room, she would laugh for a while and then shed a few tears for the early death of the "exceptional" man, whom I knew only from a collection of photographs. As she cried, I would try to picture my grandparents sauntering through the city streets, but it was hard to imagine this woman, a round, relaxed matron from a Renoir painting, as a tall, thin, nervous woman in a Modigliani tableau.

The tulle curtains in my grandmother's sitting room were always drawn, but it made little difference, since the building next door was close enough to keep the room dark. There was not a single surface that wasn't covered with frames. The most imposing contained two enormous portraits that hung above the never-used fireplace: one was a retouched photograph of my grandmother, the other of my grandfather. From the way the pictures were positioned on the wall and the way my grandparents had been posed (turned slightly toward each other, in the manner still favored by European kings and queens on stamps), anyone who met their haughty gaze would know at once that the story began with them.

They were both from a town near Manisa called Gördes, in southwestern Anatolia. My grandfather's family was known as Pamuk (Cotton) because of their pale skin and light hair. My grandmother was Circassian. (Circassian girls, famous for being tall and beautiful, were very popular in Ottoman harems.) My grandmother's father had immigrated to Anatolia during the Russian-Ottoman War (1877-78), and eventually settled in Istanbul. My grandfather was studying civil engineering there. In the early thirties, when the new Turkish Republic was investing heavily in railroads, my grandfather made a great deal of money, and then built a large factory that manufactured everything from rope to a sort of twine and dry tobacco; the factory was on the banks of the Goksu, a stream that fed into the Bosporus.

My grandfather died of leukemia in 1934, at the age of forty-six, and my grandmother became the "boss" of our large and prosperous family. That was the word her cook and lifelong friend, Bekir, used with light sarcasm when he tired of her never-ending commands and complaints: "Whatever you say, boss!" But my grandmother's authority did not extend beyond the house, which she patrolled with a large set of keys. When my father and my uncle lost the factory they had inherited at a very young age from my grandfather, entered into costly construction projects, and made rash investments that ended in failure, forcing us to sell off the family assets one by one, my grandmother would just shed a few more tears and tell them to be a bit more careful next time.

In the library, photographs of the new generation were arranged in a careful symmetry along the walls. My prolonged study of them made me appreciate the importance of preserving certain moments for posterity, and I also saw what a powerful influence the scenes exerted over us as we went about our daily lives. To watch my uncle pose a math problem to my brother, and at the same time to see him in a picture taken thirty-two years earlier; to watch my father scanning the newspaper and trying, with a half smile, to catch the tail of a joke rippling across the crowded room, and at that very same moment to see a picture of him at five years old—with his hair as long as a girl's—it seemed plain to me that my grandmother had frozen these memories so that we could weave them into the present. When, in the tones

The author (left) with his father and brother, in 1955; the brothers, with their mother in the Pamuk Apartments, in 1954.

COURTESY ORHAN PAMUK

ordinarily preserved for discussing the founding of a nation, my grandmother, presiding over the dinner table, spoke of my grandfather who had died so young, and pointed at the frames on the tables and the walls, it seemed that she, too, was pulled in two directions, wanting to get on with life but also longing to capture the moment of perfection, savoring the ordinary but still honoring the ideal.

When I was little, I loved these long, festive meals. As the family played tombola and I watched my uncles laughing (under the influence of vodka or raki) and my grandmother smiling (under the influence of her tiny glass of beer), I could not help noticing how much more fun life was outside the picture frame. I felt the security of belonging to a large and happy family, and could bask in the illusion that we had been put on earth to take pleasure in it. By ourselves, in the privacy of our own apartment, my mother was always grousing to my brother and me about the cruelties of "your aunt," "your uncle," "your grandmother." In the event of a disagreement over who owned what, or the division of shares of the rope factory, or who would live on which floor of the apartment building, the only certainty was that there would never be a resolution.

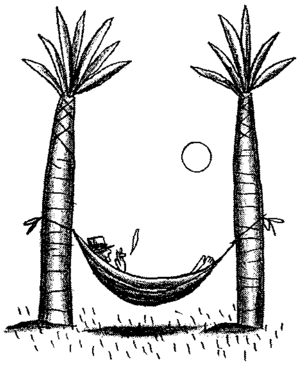
If I was too young to understand the underlying cause of these disputes—that my family, still living as it had done in the days of the Ottoman mansion, was slowly falling apart—I did begin to notice my father's bankruptcies and his ever more frequent absences. I could hear in greater detail how bad things were whenever my mother took my brother and me to visit our other grandmother in her ghost-ridden house. While my brother and I played, my mother complained and her mother would counsel patience. This grandmother, worried, perhaps, that my mother would want to return to the dusty three-story house in which she now lived all alone, was endlessly bringing its many drawbacks to our attention.

Apart from the occasional show of temper, my father found little cause to complain in life; he took a childish delight in his looks, his brains, and his good fortune, which he never tried to hide. Inside the house, he was always whistling, inspecting his reflection in the mirror, rubbing a wedge of lemon like brilliantine on his hair. He loved jokes, word games, surprises, reciting poetry, showing off his cleverness, taking planes to faraway places. He was never a father to scold, forbid, or punish. When he took us out, we would wander all over the city, making friends wherever we went, and during these excursions I came to think of the world as a place made for taking pleasure. If a problem arose, my father's response was to turn his back on it and remain silent. My mother, who set the rules, was the one to raise her eyebrows and instruct us about life's darker side. But I depended on her love and affection, for she gave us far more time than our father, who seized every opportunity to escape from the house.

In the evenings, when we gathered in my grandmother's sitting room as a family, I often played a game wherein my grandmother's apartment became the captain's station of a large ship. This fantasy owed much to the traffic passing through the Bosporus; those mournful horns made their way into my dreams as I lay in bed. As I steered my imaginary ship through the storm, my crew and passengers ever more troubled by the rising waves, I took a captain's pride in knowing that our ship, our family, our fate, was in my hands.

But as my father and my uncle stumbled from one bankruptcy to the next, as our fortune dwindled and our family disintegrated and the quarrels over money grew more intense, every visit to my grandmother's apartment became a sorrow and a step closer to a realization: it was a long time coming, arriving by a circuitous route, but the cloud of gloom and loss that the fall of the Ottoman Empire had spread over Istanbul finally claimed my family, too.

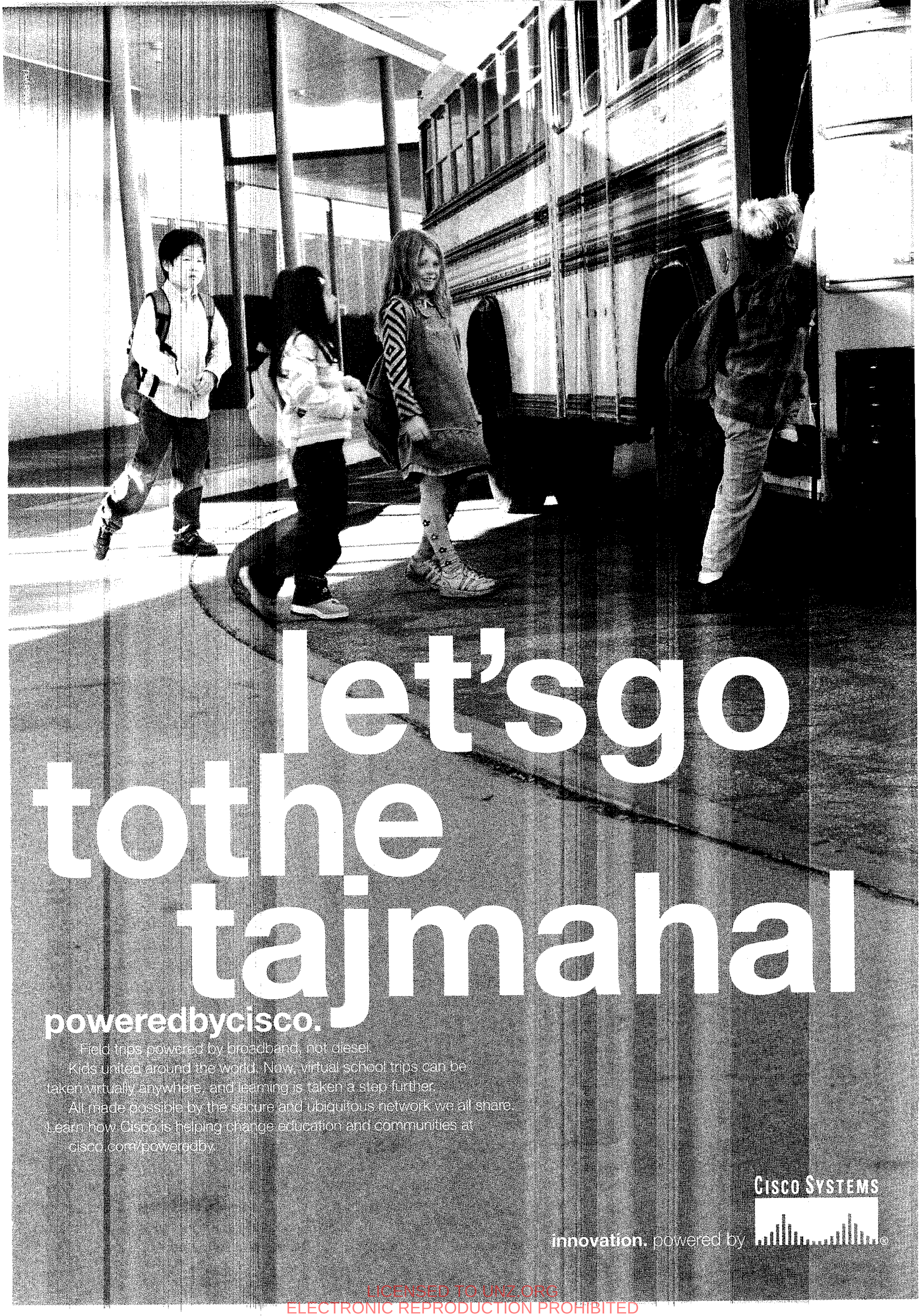
The Pamuk Apartments were built in the hills above the city, at the edge of a large lot in Nisantasi that had once been the garden of a pasha's mansion. The name Nisantasi (target stone) comes from the days of the reformist, Westernizing sultans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, who practiced shooting and archery in the hills. When the Ottoman sultans, fearing tuberculosis and desiring Western comforts, as well as a change of scene, abandoned Topkapi Palace for new palaces outside the old town, their viziers and princes began to build themselves wooden mansions in the hills of Nisantasi.



Through the back windows of our building on Tesvikiye Avenue, beyond the cypress and linden trees, you could see the remains of the mansion of Tunisian Hayrettin Pasha, a Circassian from the Caucasus who served as Grand Vizier for a short while just after the Russian-Ottoman War. As a young boy, in the eighteen-thirties (a decade before Flaubert wrote that he wanted to move to Istanbul and buy a slave), he'd been brought to Istanbul and sold into slavery, eventually finding a place in the household of the governor of Tunis, where he was brought up speaking Arabic. He joined the Army, served as a Tunisian representative in France, and eventually worked at command headquarters, in the parliament, in the diplomatic corps, and was the president of a commission that was established to reform the country's finances. After he left office, Sultan Abdülhamit summoned him to Istanbul.

The sultan engaged Tunisian Hayrettin Pasha as a financial adviser for a short time, and soon he made him Grand Vizier. The pasha thus became one in a long line of financial experts with international experience who were given the mandate to save Turkey from debt. As with many of his successors, people expected a great deal of this pasha, simply because he was seen as more of a Westerner than an Ottoman or a Turk. And, for precisely the same reason, he was later resented. The gossip was that Tunisian Hayrettin Pasha would make notes in Arabic when returning home in his horse-drawn carriage from his meetings in Turkish at the palace; later he would dictate these to his secretary in French. The coup de grâce was an informer's report of rumors that the pasha's Turkish was poor and that his secret aim was to establish an Arabic-speaking state; Abdülhamit knew these rumors were essentially base-

SPOT DRAWINGS BY JACQUES DE LOUSTAL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less, but he nevertheless removed the pasha from his post. The disgraced pasha ended his days in the mansion whose garden would later be the site of our apartment.

The only stone mansion still standing in our neighborhood was a former home of grand viziers which had passed into the hands of the municipality after the Ottoman Empire fell and the capital moved to Ankara. I remember going for my smallpox vaccination to another old pasha's mansion that had become the headquarters of the district council. The rest—those mansions where Ottoman officials had once entertained foreign emissaries, and those of Abdülhamit's daughters—I remember only as dilapidated brick shells with gaping windows and broken staircases darkened by bracken and untended fig trees. By the late fifties, most of them had been burned down or demolished to make way for apartment buildings.

Watching the pashas' mansions burn to the ground, my family maintained a stony equanimity—much as we had done in the face of all those stories about crazy princes, opium addicts in the palace harem, children locked in attics, treacherous sultans' daughters, exiled or murdered pashas, and, ultimately, the decline of the empire itself. As we in Nisantasi saw it, the republic had done away with the pashas, princes, and high officials, so the empty mansions they had left behind were only decrepit anomalies. Still, the melancholy and mystery of this dying culture was all around us. In childhood, I felt this as a deadening tedium, which I identified with the *alaturka* music to which my grandmother tapped her slippered feet.

One escape was to go out with my mother. Because it was not yet the custom to take children to parks or gardens for their daily fresh air, the days on which we went out were momentous. "Tomorrow I'm going out with my mother!" I'd boast to my cousin who lived downstairs. After walking down the spiral staircase, my mother and I would pause before the little window facing the door, through which the caretaker could see everyone coming and going. I would inspect my clothes in the reflection, and my mother would make sure that all my buttons were fastened; once outside, I would exclaim in amazement, "The street!"

Sun, fresh air, light. Our house was so dark that stepping out was like opening the curtains too abruptly on a summer day—the light hurt my eyes. Holding my mother's hand, I gazed at the displays in shopwindows: through the steamy window of the florist's, the cyclamens that looked like red wolves; in the window of the shoe shop, the barely visible wires that suspended the high-heeled shoes in midair; in the laundry (just as steamy as the florist's), the sweating men who cleaned and ironed my father's shirts. There was an old Greek lady who darned stockings and sold belts and buttons; she also sold "eggs from the village," which she'd take out of a varnished chest one by one, like jewels. In her store was an aquarium where undulating red fish would try to bite my finger, pressed against the glass, with a stupid determination that never failed to amuse me. Next, there was a tobacconist cum stationery and newspaper shop, so small and crowded that most days we'd give up the moment we entered. There was a coffee shop called the "Arab shop." (Just as Arabs in Latin America were often known as "Turks," the handful of blacks in Istanbul were known as "Arabs.") The shop's enormous belted coffee grinder would begin to thunder like the washing machine at home and, as I moved away from it, the "Arab" would smile indulgently at my fear. When these shops closed, one by one, to make way for a string of more modern enterprises, my brother and I would play a game inspired less by nostalgia than by a desire to test our memories. One of us would say, "The shop next to the Girls' Night School," and the other would list its later incarnations: (1) the Greek lady's pastry shop, (2) a florist's, (3) a handbag store, (4) a watch shop, (5) a soccer bookie, (6) a gallery bookshop, (7) a pharmacy. But it was from the windows of the stationery store, in which I noticed the same school notebooks my brother used, that I learned an early lesson: our habits and possessions were not unique. There were other people outside our apartment who lived lives very similar to ours.

My father often went to faraway places. We would not see him for months on end. Strangely, we hardly noticed his absence until he'd already been gone for some time. By then, we

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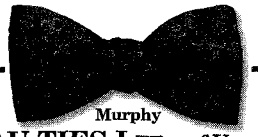
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ON THE FARM

The cows are to be slaughtered
And the sheep, too, of course.
The same for the hogs sighing in their pens—
And as for the chickens,

Two have been killed for dinner tonight
While the rest peck side by side
As the shadows lengthen in the yard
And bales of hay turn gold in the fields.

One cow has stopped grazing
And has looked up, puzzled,
Seeing a little white cloud
Trot like a calf to the fires of sunset.

On the porch someone has pressed
A rocking chair into service
But we can't tell who it is: a ghost,
Or that small boy who never has anything to say?

—*Charles Simic*

were already accustomed to it—rather in the way you might realize belatedly that a seldom-used bicycle has been lost or stolen. No one ever explained why our father wasn't with us, and neither did anyone tell us when to expect his return. It did not occur to us to press for information: because we lived in a big apartment building, surrounded by uncles, aunts, my grandmother, cooks, and maids, it was easy to pass lightly over his absence without stopping to question it.

When boredom loomed, I would push the bottles and brushes toward the center of my mother's dressing table, along with a locked silver box with floral decorations which I had never once seen my mother open, and, bringing my head forward so that I could see it in the central panel of the mirror triptych, I would push the two wings of the mirror inward or outward until I saw thousands of Orhans shimmering in the deep, cold, glass-colored infinity. When I looked into the nearest reflections, the back of my head would shock me, as did my ears at first—they came to a rounded point at the back, and one of them stuck out more than the other, just like my father's. Even more interesting was the back of my neck, which made me feel as if my body were a stranger I carried with me—the thought is still chilling. Caught between the three mirrors, the tens and hundreds of reflected Orhans changed every time I altered the panels' positions even slightly, and, although each new succession was different from all the others, I was proud to see how slavishly each one aped my every gesture.

Losing myself inside my reflections came to be "the disappearing game," and perhaps I played it in order to prepare myself for the thing I dreaded most: although I did not know what my mother was saying on the phone, or where my father was or when he would return, I knew that my mother was prone to disappear, too. But when *she* disappeared they'd give us a reason: something like "Your mother is ill and resting at Aunt Neriman's." I treated these explanations as I did the mirror reflections: knowing them to be illusions, I still accepted them, allowing myself to be fooled. A few days would pass before we'd be handed over to Bekir the cook or Ismail the caretaker. With them, we'd take boats and buses all the way across Istanbul—to relatives on the Asian side of the city, in Erenköy, or to other relatives in the Bosporus town of Istinye—to visit my mother. These were not sad visits: they felt like adventures. Because I had my older brother with me, I felt that I could count on him to meet all dangers first. The houses we visited were all inhabited by near and distant relations of my mother. When these compassionate old aunts and hairy uncles had finished kissing us and pinching our cheeks, after they had shown us whatever strange thing in their house had attracted our attention—a German barometer that I once thought was shared by all the Westernized houses of the city (a miniature man and wife in Bavarian dress would leave and reënter their home according to the weather); or a clock with a cuckoo that would turn on its axis and retreat sharply into its cage every half hour to announce the time; or a real canary warbling in response to its mechanical cousin—we would proceed to our mother's room.

Dazzled by the bright expanse of sea that showed through the window, and by the beauty of the light (perhaps this is why I've always loved Matisse's south-facing window views), we would remember, sadly, that our mother had left us for this odd and beautiful place, but we were reassured by the familiar things that we saw on her dressing table—the same tweezers and perfume bottles, the same hairbrush with its lacquered back half-peeled away, and, wafting through the air, her incomparably sweet smell. I remember how she would take each of us on her lap, in turn, and embrace us warmly; how she would give my brother detailed instructions about what he was to say, how he was to behave, and where to find the things he was to bring her the next time we came. My mother had always been fond of giving instructions. While she did all this, I'd look out the window, paying them no attention until it was my turn to sit on her lap.

One day, when my mother was staying with Aunt Neriman, my father came back to the house with a nanny. She was short, with very pale skin, far from beautiful, round, and always smiling; when she took charge of us she said that we were to behave just as she did. The nannies we knew were mostly Germans, with Protestant souls; this one was Turkish and held no authority for us. When we fought, she'd say, "Nice and quiet, please, nice and quiet," and when we imitated her in front of my father he laughed. Before long, she, too, disappeared. Years later, when my mother really lost her temper she would say things like "I'm leaving!" or "I'm going to throw myself out the window!" (once going so far as to dangle one of her beautiful legs over the windowsill). But whenever she said, "And then your father will marry that other woman!," the candidate for new mother I'd imagine was not one of the women whose names she sometimes blurted out in a moment of anger but that pale, round, well-meaning, and bewildered nanny.

Because these dramas all took place on the same small stage, and because we almost always talked about the same things, and ate the same things, even arguments could be deadly dull. But there was one fight in the early years that had a deeper effect on me. One evening, during supper in our summer home on the island of Heybeli, not far from Istanbul, my mother and father both left the table. For a while, my brother and I sat staring at our plates as we listened to them shouting at each other on the top floor, and then, almost by instinct, we went upstairs. When my mother saw us trying to join the scuffle, she pushed us into the next room and shut the door. The room was dark, but a strong light shone through the Art Nouveau designs on the frosted glass of the two large French doors. My brother and I watched as our mother's and father's shadows approached each other and pulled apart, then moved forward again to touch each other, shouting as they blended into a single shadow. From time to time, this shadow play became so violent that the frosted glass trembled—just as it did when we went to the Karagöz shadow theatre and everything was black and white.

My grandmother passed her mornings in bed, under heavy quilts, propped up against a pile of huge down pillows. Every morning, Bekir served her soft-boiled eggs, olives, goat cheese, and toast on a tray that he placed carefully on a pillow (it would have spoiled the ambience to put an old newspaper between the flower-embroidered pillow and the silver tray, as practicality would have dictated); my grandmother would linger over her breakfast, reading the paper and receiving her first guests of the day. (It was from her that I learned the joy of drinking sweet tea with a piece of hard goat cheese in my mouth.) My uncle, who never left for work without first embracing his mother, paid his visit early every morning. After my aunt had sent him off, she, too, would stop in, clutching her handbag. For a short period before beginning school, when it had been decided that it was time I learned to read, I did as my brother had done: every morning, I arrived with a notebook in hand, established myself on my grandmother's quilt, and tried to learn the alphabet from her. As I would discover when I began school, it bored me to learn things from someone else, and when I saw a blank piece of paper my first impulse was not to write something but to blacken the page with drawings.

In the middle of these reading and writing lessons, Bekir would come in and ask the same question, using the same words: "What are we going to serve these people today?"

He asked this question with enormous gravity, as if he were charged with running the kitchen of a large hospital or an army barracks. He and my grandmother would discuss who was coming from which apartment for lunch and supper, and what should be cooked for them, and then my grandmother would take out her great almanac, which was full of mysterious information and pictures of clocks; they would look for inspiration at the "menu of the day" as I watched a crow flying among the branches of the cypress tree in the back garden.

Despite a heavy workload, Bekir never lost his sense of humor and had nicknames for everyone in the household, from my grandmother to her youngest grandchild. Mine was Crow. Years later, he told me that it was because I was always watching the crows on the roof next door, and also because I was thin. My brother was very much attached to his Teddy bear and wouldn't go anywhere without it, so to Bekir he was Nurse. One cousin, who had narrow eyes, was Japan; another, who was stubborn, was Goat. A cousin born prematurely was called Six-Month. For years, he called us by these names, his gentle mockery softened by compassion.

In my grandmother's room, as in my mother's, there was a dressing table with a winged mirror; I would have liked to open its panels and lose myself in the re-

DOORS
DO NOT HOLD DOORS
1

"Start spreadin' the news . . . I'm leavin' today . . . "

flections, but this mirror I was not allowed to touch. My grandmother, who never made herself up, had positioned the table in such a way that she could see all the way down the long corridor, past the service entrance and the vestibule, and right across the sitting room to the windows that looked out onto the street, thus allowing her to supervise everything that happened in the house—the comings and goings, the conversations in corners, and the quarrelling grandchildren beyond—without getting out of bed. Because the house was always so dark, the reflection of a particular maneuver was often too faint to see, so my grandmother would have to shout in order to ask what was going on, and Bekir would rush in to report who was doing what.

When she wasn't reading the paper or embroidering flowers on pillowcases, my grandmother spent her afternoons with other Nisantasi ladies, mostly of her age, smoking cigarettes and playing bezique, and also, on occasion, poker. Among the poker chips, which she kept in a soft, blood-red velvet pouch, were old perforated Ottoman coins, some with scalloped edges and others inscribed with imperial monograms, and I liked to take these into the corner and play with them.

One of the ladies at the game table was from the sultan's harem; after the fall of the empire, when the Ottomans were forced to leave Istanbul, they closed the harem, and this lady married one of my grandfather's colleagues. My brother and I made fun of her overly polite way of speaking: despite the fact that she and my grandmother were friends, they would address each other as "Madam" while falling happily upon the oily crescent rolls and cheese toasts that Bekir had brought them straight from the oven. Both were fat, but, because they lived at a time and in a culture in which this was not stigmatized, they were at ease about it. If—as happened once every forty years—my grandmother had to go out, the preparations would go on for days, until my grandmother shouted for Kamer Hanim, the janitor's wife, to come up and pull with all her strength on the strings of her corset. I would watch nervously as the corseting scene progressed behind the screen with much pushing and pulling, and cries of "Easy, girl, easy!" I was bewitched, too, by the manicurist, who would have paid my grandmother a visit some days earlier. This woman sat there for hours, with bowls of soapy water, and many strange instruments assembled all around her; I stood transfixed as she painted my revered grandmother's toenails firehouse-red, and the sight of her placing cotton balls between my grandmother's plump toes evoked in me a combination of fascination and revulsion.

Twenty years later, when we were living in other houses in other parts of Istanbul, I often visited my grandmother in the Pamuk Apartments, and if I arrived in the morning I would find her in the same bed, surrounded by the same bags, newspapers, pillows, and shadows. The smell in the room—a mixture of soap, cologne, dust, and wood—never varied, either. My grandmother always kept with her a slim leather-bound notebook, in which, every day, she recorded bills, memories, meals, expenses, schedules, and meteorological developments. Perhaps because she'd studied history, she liked to follow "official etiquette" on occasion—though there was always a note of sarcasm in her voice when she did—and each of her five grandsons was named after a victorious sultan. Every time I saw her, I kissed her hand; then she would give me some money, which I shamefacedly but gladly slipped into my pocket. After I had told her what my mother, father, and brother were up to, she would sometimes read me what she'd written in her notebook: "My grandson Orhan came to visit. He's very intelligent, very sweet. He's studying architecture at university. I gave him ten liras. With God's will, one day he'll be very successful and the Pamuk family name will once again be spoken of with respect, as it was when his grandfather was alive."

After reading this, she would peer at me through her glasses, which made her cataracts look even more disconcerting, and give me a strange, mocking smile. As I wondered whether she was laughing at herself or laughing because she knew by now that life was nonsense, I tried to smile in the same way. ♦

(*Translated, from the Turkish, by Maureen Freely.*)

THE NEW YORKER, NOV. 12, 1927
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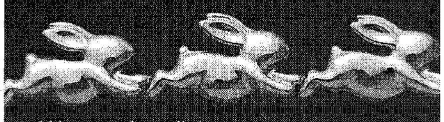
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THE POLITICAL SCENE

BLOWING UP THE SENATE

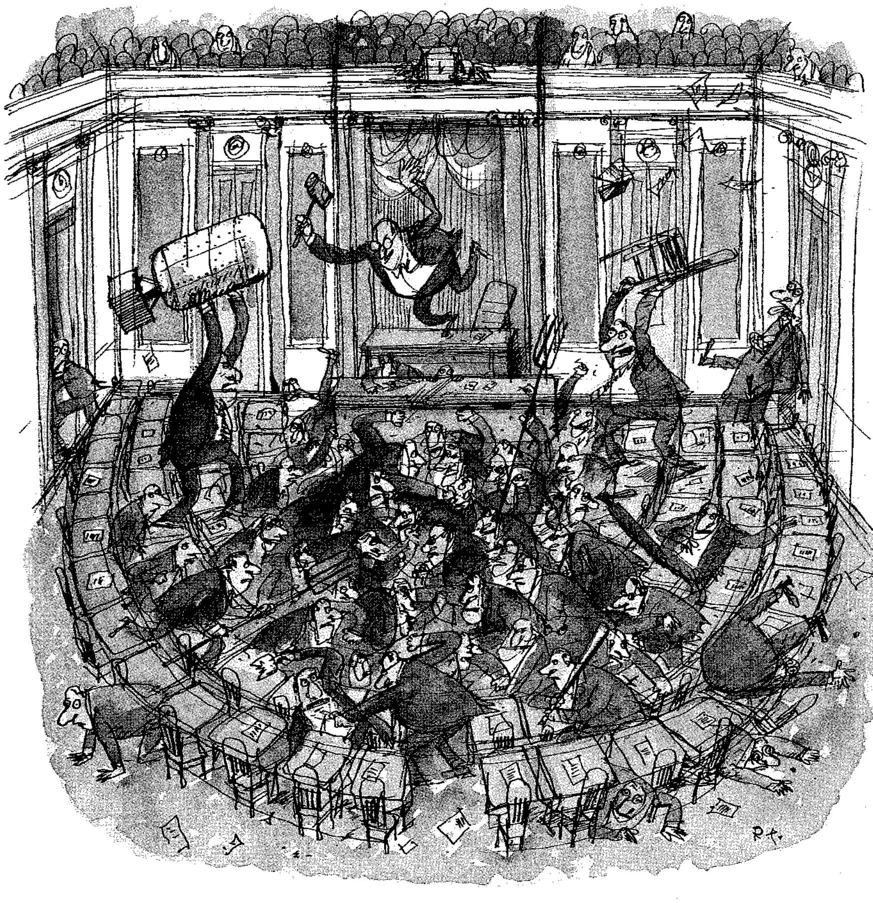
Will Bush's judicial nominees win with the "nuclear option"?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

Most popular histories of Congress include an exchange, very likely apocryphal, in which Washington and Jefferson discuss the difference between the House and the Senate. "Why did you pour that coffee into your saucer?" Washington asks. "To cool it," Jefferson replies. "Even so," Washington says, "we pour legislation into the senatorial saucer to cool it." For Joseph Biden, the Delaware Democrat and a senator since 1973, the Senate remains a place where "you can always slow things down and make sure that a minority gets a voice," he said recently. And, he added, "the chance to filibuster"—using extended debate in order to block legislation—"is what makes the difference between this body and the other one." It takes three-fifths of the Senate—or sixty senators—to break a filibuster. (The cloture rule, as it is known, has been in effect since 1917; before 1975, it took a two-thirds vote to end a debate.) But the filibuster rule may soon be altered in a dramatic way, and the Senate itself may change along with it.

The precipitating factor is a continuing controversy over President Bush's judicial selections. Although more than two hundred of Bush's nominees were approved by the Senate in the past four years, Democrats used the filibuster to stop ten appellate-court choices. As a result, some Republicans are pushing to alter the Senate's rules so that a simple majority could cut off debate on judicial nominees. With the Senate now split fifty-five to forty-four (with one independent) in favor of the Republicans, the change could render the Democrats almost powerless to stop Bush's choices, including nominees to the United States Supreme Court. The magnitude of this transformation of the rules is suggested by the nickname it has acquired within the Senate: the "nuclear option."

The man at the center of the controversy over judicial nominations is Senator Arlen Specter, who also, as it happens, reflects the broader transformation of the Senate itself. Specter, of Pennsylvania, was elected in 1980. These days, in his office overlooking the Supreme Court, he surveys, not happily, the current state of his party—especially the disappearance of moderates like him. "We had a lot of senators," he said. "We could go on and on and on," and he named, as examples of this group, Bob Packwood, Mark Hatfield, Lowell Weicker, Charles Mathias, and John Heinz. "And we don't have them now. So it's not good for the Party, and it's not good for the country. It's not good for the Party because you need balance. You need to be a national party." Since 1980, the year of the Ronald Reagan landslide, moderate Republicans have been a vanishing species.



If the G.O.P. changes the filibuster rule, the Senate itself may be greatly transformed.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Specter's election, last year, to his fifth term showed how estranged he had grown from much of his own party. In an abrasive Republican primary, one in which Bush campaigned for him, Specter barely defeated a conservative challenger; but he won by eleven per cent in the general election, in a state carried by John Kerry. On November 3rd, the day after the election, a reporter asked Specter about possible Supreme Court nominees, an issue that had fresh importance because Specter, a longtime member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, was finally in line to become its chairman and thus the steward of Bush's judicial appointments. Repeating a view that he had expressed many times, Specter said that he regarded the protection of abortion rights, established by Roe v. Wade, as "inviolate," and he suggested that "nobody can be confirmed today" who disagrees with that opinion. Virtually overnight, the conservative groups that had supported the primary challenge against Specter, such as Focus on the Family, demanded that he be denied the chairmanship.

The criticism had a personal dimension, too. Charm has played little role in Specter's political career; he has an air of superiority that hovers just short of a perpetual sneer, which he isn't afraid to inflict on senatorial colleagues or on his staff. (To see Specter walk through his office, where I met with him recently, is to watch his underlings cower.) His abundant self-confidence was first on view during his days as a staff lawyer on the Warren Commission, where he championed the "single-bullet theory" for the assassination of John F. Kennedy. (The theory—upon which the possibility of a lone gunman depends—supposes that one bullet struck President Kennedy before travelling onward to inflict multiple wounds on Governor John Connally.) During his tenure on the Judiciary Committee, Specter has been at the center of several major battles. In 1987, he voted against President Reagan's nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court; four years later, though, he was one of Clarence Thomas's principal supporters, and at one point accused Anita Hill of committing perjury during her testimony.

Not surprisingly, more than a few people, especially in the conservative base of the Republican Party, enjoyed the thought of making Specter's life uncomfortable. On November 17th, he was forced to ask his colleagues for the Judiciary chairmanship. After separate meetings with the Senate leadership and with other Republicans on the Judiciary Committee, Specter was told that he could assume the chairmanship—on several conditions. At a press conference the next day, Specter made those conditions public. Introduced by Orrin Hatch, of Utah, who was barred by term limits from continuing as Judiciary chairman, Specter recited the provisions of the deal. "I have not and would not use a litmus test to deny confirmation to pro-life nominees," Specter said, in the weary monotone of a Soviet prisoner forced to confess his ideological errors. "I have voted for all of President Bush's judicial nominees in committee and on the floor, and I have no reason to believe that I'll be unable to support any individual President Bush finds worthy of nomination."

I had been in Specter's office the previous day and had asked him whether he supported the change in the filibuster rule. He was noncommittal, saying, "If the Republican caucus decides to consider it, I'll give it some serious thought." Overnight, apparently, he had. At the press conference, Specter said he would use his "best efforts to stop any future filibusters. . . . If a rule change is necessary to avoid filibusters, there are relevant recent precedents to secure rule changes with fifty-one votes."

On the Judiciary Committee, the chairman remains on a kind of extended probation. "Everyone who pays attention knows that Senator Specter comes from a state and a segment of the Party that are to the left of the President and the Republican caucus," John Cornyn, a conservative first-term senator from Texas, said. (In his outer office, Specter has three photographs of himself with Bill Clinton, while the television in Cornyn's space is tuned to Fox News.) "People are looking very closely to see what he is really going to do. I have been pretty pleased from what I've seen of Senator Specter's performance so far."

The controversy effectively neutralized Specter as a possible impediment to Bush's judicial nominees; the rules of the Senate remained another obstacle. A vote of two-thirds of the Senate is required to end a filibuster against a rules change. But, as one delves into those rules, they look less like fixed laws and more like accommodations of a shifting power structure.

Changing the Senate's rules on judicial filibustering was first addressed in 2003, during the successful Democratic filibuster against Miguel Estrada, whom Bush had nominated to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Ted Stevens, a Republican Senate veteran from Alaska, was complaining in the cloakroom that the Democratic tactic should simply be declared out of order, and, soon enough, a group of Republican aides began to talk about changing the rules. It was understood at once that such a change would be explosive; Senator Trent Lott, the former Majority Leader, came up with "nuclear option," and the term stuck.

This cloakroom conversation has evolved into a full-fledged proposal, complete with an intellectual pedigree. Several Republican senators told me that they had spent part of the Christmas recess reading the draft of a law-review article co-written by Martin B. Gold, an expert

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on Senate procedures, who served as an aide to Bill Frist after he became Majority Leader. The article, "The Constitutional Option to Change Senate Rules and Procedures: A Majoritarian Means to Overcome the Filibuster," which was recently published by the *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy*, is a step-by-step guide to changing the Senate rules.

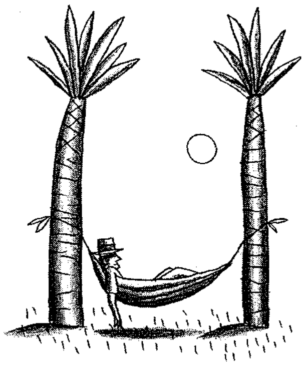
According to Gold's scenario, in an extended debate over a judicial nominee a senator could raise a point of order that "any further debate is dilatory and not in order." If the Presiding Officer of the Senate—Vice-President Dick Cheney—sustained the point of order, Gold wrote, "he would set a new, binding Senate precedent allowing Senators to cut off debate." Democrats could challenge the Vice-President, but it takes only a majority vote to sustain a ruling by the Presiding Officer. The Republicans, with their majority, could both cut off debate on a nominee and establish a precedent that would apply to all future judicial nominations. (A legal challenge by Democrats would almost surely fail, because courts generally defer to the other branches of government on matters concerning their internal operations.) Henceforth, then, filibusters on judges would be impossible.

Republicans have started to call the tactic the "constitutional option." In part, this is simply marketing, but the name also reflects the opinion of Orrin Hatch, among others, that the Republicans' action has a basis in the Constitution, as well as in the Senate rules. With nearly three decades in the Senate, Hatch, who is seventy, may be the nation's best-known Utahan, even though his Midwestern accent betrays his roots, in Pittsburgh. He was for many years rumored to be a possible Republican appointee to the Supreme Court, and has become instead the unofficial lead constitutional lawyer for Senate Republicans. "The Founding Fathers knew how to create a supermajority requirement when they wanted to," he told me. "They did it with amending the Constitution, they did it with ratifying treaties, which both require two-thirds of the Senate. And just a few lines below that they said 'advice and consent' on judges—no supermajority requirement. By using filibusters on the judges, the Democrats have essentially imposed a supermajority requirement, and we are entitled to stop them. This would not affect filibusters on legislation, which could still take place." Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican, who also supports the change, said, "Filibusters are designed so that the minority can bring about compromise on legislation. You can always change the words of a bill or the dollars involved. But you can't compromise a Presidential nomination. It's yes or no. So filibusters on nominations are an abuse of our function under the Constitution to advise and consent."

Hatch didn't want to wait until the next filibuster to change the rules. "I have recommended that we go to the constitutional option early in the game," he said. "The worst way to do it is during a Supreme Court nomination, and then it becomes all politics. Let's do it now."

The escalation in parliamentary warfare began during Bush's first term, when Democrats took an uncharacteristically aggressive tack in opposing some of his nominees to the federal appellate courts. "The standard that was used before—it's likely it will be used again—was that if the Democrats on the Judiciary Committee vote unanimously against a nominee, then the recommendation to the caucus will be to oppose the nominee, including through the use of the filibuster," Richard Durbin, the Illinois senator and assistant Majority Leader, said. "That is what led to the ten who were not confirmed." These filibusters were especially controversial because Senate Republicans certainly would have confirmed the nominees if they had received a straight up-or-down vote. "Every one of these nominees had a majority," Hatch said. "This has caused a tremendous amount of angst."

The Democratic judicial filibusters of the past several years lacked any of the accoutrements of the great marathons of the Senate's past—no men in suits dozing on cots in the cloakrooms, no recitations of poetry (or recipes) to pass the hours in debate. (In 1957, Strom Thurmond gave the longest speech in Senate history—twenty-four hours and eighteen minutes, as part of his unsuccessful effort to stop the passage of the Civil Rights Act.) During the past two years, Democrats simply announced that they planned to filibuster against certain nominees, and the Republicans agreed to move on to other business. According to one Republican Senate aide, "The Democrats could keep one or two of their people on the floor, talking all night, and they could request a quorum anytime they wanted. We'd have to keep fifty-one of our people there all night, and our people wouldn't do it. Some of them are old. Some are sick. And it wouldn't break the filibuster anyway. That's why the filibuster is so effective."

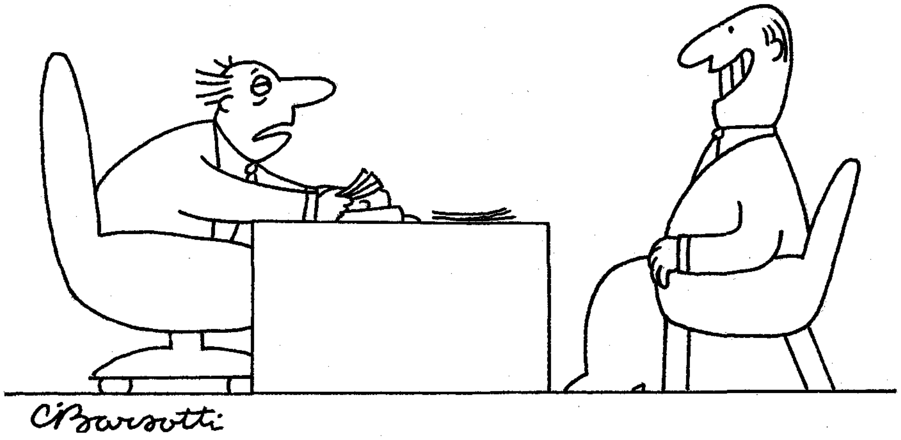


Republicans claimed that the use of the filibuster against judicial nominees who had majority support on the floor was unprecedented—a charge that had some elements of truth. Before 2000, there had been a handful of filibusters on judicial nominees, but only in extraordinary circumstances. In 1968, Republicans used one to head off Lyndon Johnson's nomination of Abe Fortas as Chief Justice, although Fortas might not have been confirmed anyway. Other kinds of obstruction, however, have become increasingly common. Republicans controlled the Senate for six of President Clinton's eight years in office, and during that time the Judiciary Committee blocked more than sixty of his judicial nominees from reaching the floor, where many of them would have been confirmed. A substantial number of these nominees never made it out of committee. "The Republicans did plenty of obstruction of Clinton's judicial nominees in the nineteen-nineties, but they did it in a different way," Sarah Binder, a professor at George Washington University and the co-author of a book on filibustering, said. "The Republicans just didn't need filibusters."

Democrats assert that, by confirming more than two hundred of Bush's nominees, they have produced for this President a better per-term average of confirmations than those for Presidents Clinton, Reagan, or George H. W. Bush. Hatch called Democratic complaints "total bullcorn," and went on, "Ronald

Reagan was the all-time confirmation champion, with three hundred and eighty-two federal judges. He had six years of a Republican Senate to help him. Guess how many Bill Clinton had with only two years of a Democratic Senate? Three hundred and seventy-seven. Not bad at all. I always gave their nominees a fair shake."

Both parties, in any case, have continued to ratchet up the partisanship. "Let me tell you how we did it in the Reagan Administration," Biden, who chaired the Judiciary Committee for several of those years, said. "They came to me and told me whom they were going to nominate, and I'd say, 'You're going to have a problem with this one or that one'—maybe a dozen out of the hundreds of judges that Reagan appointed. And I'd say, 'If you want to push that guy, all the others will wait in line behind him.' And the problems generally were removed. We did business that way for years, and it worked. Now this crowd wants to shove everything down our throats. They don't pull back on anybody. So we escalated with the filibusters. And they escalate with the nuclear option."



"What the hell? We could use an idiot."

• •

The decision of whether, and when, to push the rules change will rest largely with Bill Frist, the Republican leader. Most Majority Leaders tend to be long-serving Senate insiders, but Frist, a heart surgeon from Nashville, is only in his second term. (The job became available when Trent Lott had to step down, in December, 2002, because he made favorable comments about the 1948 Presidential campaign of the segregationist Strom Thurmond.) Frist has announced that he plans to leave the Senate in 2006, presumably to begin a run for President in 2008. "He believes that there is no issue that is more closely identified with him personally than judicial filibusters," a Frist aide told me.

Frist has been moving toward a showdown with Democrats over the issue. In May, 2003, Frist and Senator Zell Miller, a conservative Georgia Democrat, proposed a compromise of sorts, in which debate on judges could be ended on a sliding scale: the first attempt would require sixty votes, then fifty-seven, and so on until a simple majority would suffice. (Democrats threatened to filibuster the proposal, effectively killing it.) Then, on November 12, 2004, Frist gave an uncharacteristically fiery speech to the Federalist Society, the conservative lawyers' organization, denouncing judicial filibusters. "This filibuster is nothing less than a formula for tyranny by the minority," Frist said. On January 4th, in a speech on the Senate floor, Frist declared that he would bring one of the President's judicial nominees to the floor sometime in February, and he would see to it that there was an up-or-down vote. Frist also said that he does "not acquiesce to carrying over all the rules from the last Congress." Frist was taunting the Democrats, saying, "Some, I know, have suggested that the filibusters of the last Congress are reason enough to offer a procedural change today, right here and right now, but at this moment I do not choose that path." Bush gave an implicit endorsement to the change in his State of the Union address, insisting, to huge applause on the G.O.P. side of the chamber, "Every judicial nominee deserves an up-or-down vote."

Frist has the sympathetic half smile of a doctor making a house call. In his splendid Senate office, he conveys earnestness more than passion. "I'm here for twelve years in the Senate, and I'm sticking to that," he told me. "And the time limit has made me focus on the big things, the big core values, while I'm here. To me, it is crystal clear that the change in the Democrats' behavior, the use of the filibuster the way they have, is an affront to the advise-and-consent power of our Constitution."

Frist has a strong political motive to embrace the change. His allies believe that in 2008 Republican-primary voters will reward him both for defying Senate Democrats and for confirming some conservative judges. "Frist knows he is seen as a bit of a compromiser," his aide said. "He understands that this will nail it down with the base. Frist is not an institutional 'Senate guy.' He has no illusion about the Senate being the world's greatest deliberative body. To him, it's a place to get things done."

Frist's enthusiasm may not be enough to get the fifty Republican votes he needs to change the rules. On February 10th, Frist told the Washington *Times* that he had fifty-one votes, but a few days later, to me, he said, "I'm not going to talk about vote counts." Senator John McCain, of Arizona, seems likely to oppose the idea. "We Republicans are not blameless here," McCain told me. "For all intents and purposes, we filibustered Clinton's judges, by not letting them out of committee. Making this change would put us on a slippery slope to getting rid of the filibuster altogether. It's not called 'nuclear' for nothing." Several other Republican senators also expressed reservations about the idea, often using similar language. Chuck Hagel, from Nebraska, said that he was undecided, and added, "I think the judges deserve up-or-down votes, but the filibuster is an important tool for the minority in the Senate." Susan Collins, a moderate from Maine, who is also undecided, said, "It's wrong for the Democrats to filibuster judges, but I'm concerned about the effect on the work of the Senate if the constitutional, a.k.a. nuclear, option is pursued." John Sununu, a first-termer from New Hampshire, and Lamar Alexander, Frist's junior colleague from Tennessee, have not made up their minds, either. Even Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina who supports the rules change, seemed to speak for many when he said, "Nobody wants to blow the place up."

That—or something close to it—is what Democrats are threatening. "On both sides of the aisle, even among a good number of Republicans who are quite conservative, they know the nuclear option dramatically changes this place," said Charles Schumer, the New York Democrat, who has been a leader for his party on judicial confirmations. "It makes the Senate into the House of Representatives. We are no longer the cooling saucer. The whole idea of the Senate is you need a greater degree of bipartisanship, comity, than in the House. And there are many conservative senators, particularly the ones who've been around a long time, who will not change that." As Richard Durbin put it, "Several of the Republican members have been in the minority, and they know they will not be in the majority forever. They don't want to do this to the institution." But on every important vote of the past four years the Republicans have ultimately rallied to support the President.

The possibility of a Democratic retaliation—the Party's own attempt at all-out war—is real. Even without the filibuster, Senate rules give a minority the chance to make life miserable for the majority. A single member can gum up the legislative machinery, as Tom Daschle, the South Dakota Democrat, who was his party's leader for a decade in the Senate, explained. "The Senate runs on 'unanimous consent,'" Daschle said. "It takes unanimous consent to stop the reading of bills, the reading of every amendment. On any given day, there are fifteen or twenty nominations and a half-dozen bills that have been signed off for unanimous consent. The vast work of the Senate is done that way. But any individual senator can insist that every bill be read, every vote be taken, and bring the whole place to a stop." Daschle also doubted that the limitations on filibustering would in the future be applied only to judicial nominations. "Within ten years, there'd be rules that you can't filibuster tax cuts," he said.

Last November, Daschle became the first party leader in a half century to be defeated for reëlection. In a strongly Republican state, he lost a close race to John Thune, a telegenic former congressman, who made effective use of the fact that Daschle had once referred to himself as a District of Columbia resident. But another of Thune's arguments was that Daschle had become the "obstructionist-in-chief." Daschle's defeat may make a strategy based on tying up the Senate appear less than promising for the Democrats.

Specter has done his best to try to avoid a confrontation. He plans to bring up some of Bush's less controversial judicial nominees first, in an attempt to build momentum for compromise. But on February 14th Bush formally resubmitted to the Senate seven nominees whom the Democrats had filibustered in the previous two years. The confrontation may be delayed, but now, clearly, it can't be avoided. Specter's appetite for a fight may be lessened for personal reasons. On February 16th, he announced that he had Hodgkin's disease. Last week, Specter told the Washington *Post*, "If we go to the nuclear option . . . the Senate will be in turmoil and the Judiciary Committee will be hell."

One day outside the Senate chamber, I saw John Warner in an uncharacteristic pose for a politician. He had squeezed himself up against one of the old stone walls in an attempt to remain out of camera range while another senator talked to the press. In the first few years following his election in 1978, Warner was known more for being Elizabeth Taylor's sixth husband than for any legislative achievements. (The marriage lasted from 1976 to 1982.) But Warner, who is now seventy-eight, patiently moved up through the ranks, and today chairs the Armed Services Committee and is an important source of institutional memory for the Senate. "When I came to the Senate, I studied the history of the filibuster," he told me, "and unlimited debate has been an essential part of what we do since the inception of the body. Of course, the Democrats have pushed too hard and stopped too many judges, and I still don't know what I'll do if this thing comes up for a vote. I'm worried about it, and I'm worried about what's happening to the Senate. You see, I'm a traditionalist. That's my party." ♦

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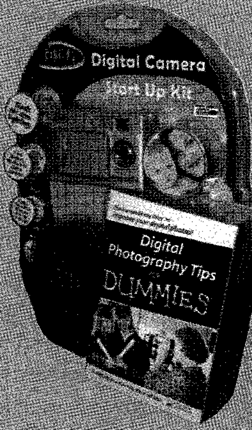

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C.I.A. UNVEILS OLD BIN LADEN TAPE

BY STEVE MARTIN

Soldier: It is a fantastic plan, Master.

Osama: It will serve all the world.

Soldier: So when do we leave for the States?

Osama: You will leave in just a few days.

Soldier: Just a few days till the beginning of our glory! Wait . . . you said, "*You* will leave."

ERIC FISCHL

Osama: Yes, you will leave in just a few days.

Soldier: You're not coming?

Osama: Oh, yes, I'm coming. I didn't mean to say that I'm not coming. I will just come a little later.

Soldier: So we'll meet you in Florida?

Osama: Absolutely. I mean, I have to do some stuff here first, but I'll meet you in Florida.

Soldier: When, Master?

Osama: Well, I just want to check my schedule and then I'll get back to you. Now, if for any reason I can't get to Florida, I will meet you at the airport here. But I will probably take a different car.

Soldier: So we will meet you at the airport?

Osama: Right. At the airport. Unless . . .

Soldier: Unless . . .

Osama: Unless, you know, there are some delays, but in fact I'll probably get there early, unless I have to wait for the cable guy.

Soldier: So you'll be there at the airport?

Osama: Right. But if you don't see me at the airport it means I'm already on the plane. Unless I have a schedule conflict. I might have to go to London to pay a bar bill at Annabel's. But it's largely definite that I'll be there. Glory!

Soldier: Glory! We're off on Thursday! Let me give you the phone number where I'll be.

Osama: Great, give it to me.

Soldier: You don't have a pen.

Osama: I can remember it.

Soldier: You don't want to write it down?

Osama: No, I can remember.

Soldier: O.K., you would dial zero zero six nine five three eight four twelve twelve six two fourteen ten four seven seven one eight nineteen eight six seven.

Osama: O.K., I got it.

Soldier: You're sure? You want to say it back to me?

Osama: No, not necessary; I got it. Regular bunch of numbers. Now go! Virgins!

Soldier: Yes! Heavenly virgins!

Osama: Well, I was just thinking regular virgins, but, yes, right—heavenly virgins! I forgot.

Soldier: O.K., we'll see you in Florida!

Osama: Yes, I'll see you there! Unless, you know, there's a problem, which there won't be. So, yes!

Soldier: Got your ticket?

Osama: Right here in my pocket—er, I mean, it's in my other suit!

Soldier: We'll die for our cause!

Osama: Yes, you will! Uh, I mean *we!* Look at me. I'm walking over to the closet and getting my suitcase. I'm starting to pack! Now, where's my Armani sweater-vest in case I stop in London first? ♦

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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

SIGN-OFF

The long and complicated career of Dan Rather.

BY KEN AULETTA

On the door to Dan Rather's office at CBS are two fading gold lines of script: "Go tell the Spartans, thou who passest by, / That here, obedient to their laws, we lie." The quotation, Rather told me—the words of the Spartans who died holding off the Persian army at the Battle of Thermopylae—has served as an inspiration ever since Mrs. Spencer, his fourth-grade teacher in Houston, Texas, first read it aloud in class. "They fought to the last man," he said. "I read that as loyalty. That's what it's come to mean to me. Loyal to the very end. Loyal to their beliefs. Loyal to their code." Rather, it was clear, was talking about himself; it was December, and he and several CBS News colleagues were awaiting the results of an outside investigation into their work which threatened their livelihoods and their reputations.

Rather's office is, at first glance, gloomy, dimly lighted, filled with old, dark furniture and mementos of his career: a camouflage shirt, from his time covering the war in Vietnam, and a wool hat and shawl that he wore getting into Afghanistan soon after the Soviet invasion, in 1980—his "Gunga Dan" moment. A Royal typewriter dominates his desk, though he never uses it. It is there, he said, because "it reminds me of what I aspire to be—I want to be a great reporter."

A meteorological sign for hurricanes is woven into the left forearm of many of Rather's shirts; Rather got his start at CBS after covering Hurricane Carla, in September of 1961. "The thing on my sleeve," he explained, is a warning: " 'Do not forget who you are and what got you here.' " Upon becoming the anchor of the "CBS Evening News," in 1981, Rather worried that if he stayed in the studio he "would come across as something phony." He went on, "And the one thing I hope, and I believe, is that even my enemies think that I am authentic. In my heart, my marrow, I am a reporter. And one who doesn't play it safe." Not long after this conversation, Rather went off to Thailand, Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka, to cover the tsunami; two weeks later, he was in Iraq for the election.

Since assuming the anchor chair, from Walter Cronkite, Rather has been what Jim Murphy, the executive producer of the "CBS Evening News," calls a "voice of God"—a reference to the authority of the three network anchors, who together address nearly thirty million viewers nightly. In the past twenty years or so, the authority of this divine collective voice has greatly diminished, but the anchors nevertheless still play a number of roles—host, reporter, and, in times of crisis, reassuring guide. Rather spreads himself thin. For "60 Minutes Wednesday," he is a correspondent. For CBS Radio, he is a daily commentator. For the network, he is the figurehead, the lead reporter, the managing editor, and the brand—the star to be trotted out for advertisers. Between seven and eight million people watch his show each night, and his viewers are aware of his quirks, his "Ratherisms"—those odd, down-home expressions that come tumbling out during the election season. ("This race is shakier than cafeteria Jell-O.") Rather compares the anchor job "to a very high trapeze act, frequently with no net."

At the beginning of 2005, Rather and the "CBS Evening News" were in third place in the nightly-news ratings, as they had been for a decade. But Rather's situation had been particularly precarious since September 8th, when "60 Minutes Wednesday" aired a report on President Bush's service in the Texas Air National Guard, from 1968 to 1973, that turned out to be deeply flawed. (The report had something new—a former Texas lieutenant governor, Ben Barnes, a Democrat, acknowledged on camera for the first time that he tried to help get Bush into the Guard—but, relying in part on dubious documents, it also asserted a more explosive charge: that Bush's superiors allowed him to skip his military obligations.) In November, while the outside panel, appointed by CBS, investigated, Rather announced that he would step down from the anchor desk on March 9th, at least a year before he had originally planned to retire.

Not only did Rather find it hard to let go but his future at CBS was suddenly unclear. It was announced that he would become a full-time correspondent, primarily for "60 Minutes Wednesday," whose ratings are relatively low. Then, in January, Leslie Moonves, the co-chairman of CBS and the co-president of Viacom, which owns CBS, told the *Times* that Rather would continue his career on the "60 Minutes Wednesday" program "provided the show continues." Andrew Heyward, the president of CBS News, whom Rather had helped recruit from WCBS-TV, the local CBS affiliate in New York, and who had been Rather's executive producer, was talking to people within the news division about who should succeed Rather, and talking to Moonves about changing the format of the newscast—without consulting Rather. (Rather's successor has not been announced. Bob Schieffer, the chief Washington correspondent and the moderator of "Face the Nation," was asked in early February to be his interim replacement, starting on March 10th, an appointment that Rather did not learn about until the public did.) Then, in early January, the outside panel released its report: it was an utterly damning study, which took CBS News to task for the National Guard story and for a stubborn refusal to acknowledge mistakes.

The day after the report was issued, Rather sent an e-mail to all CBS News employees saying only that he would "keep its lessons well in mind." He did not say much else, and when, a few days later, I was scheduling an interview with him, his spokesperson, Kim Akhtar, cautioned me that he wouldn't talk about

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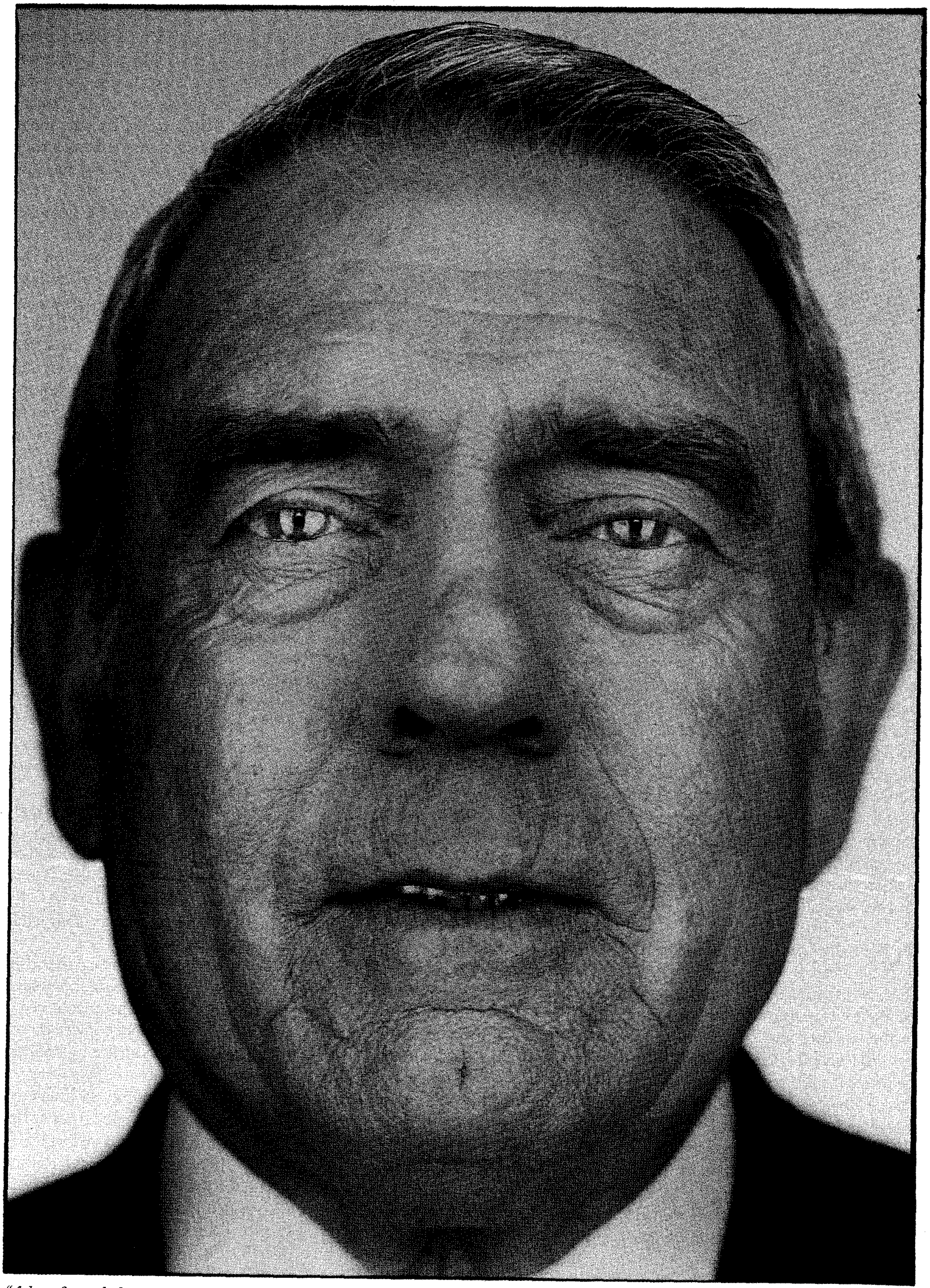
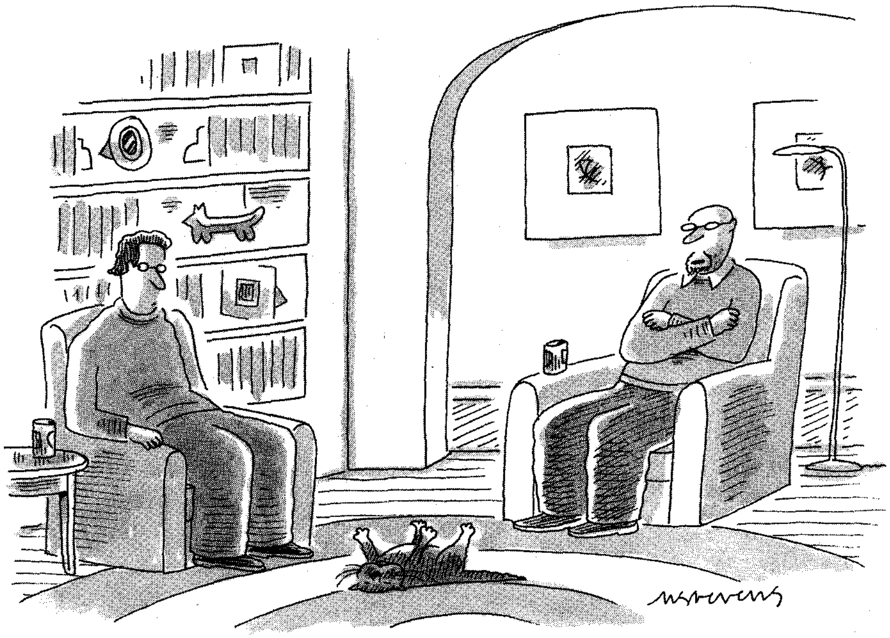


"A lot of people know Dan, and nobody knows him," one of his producers says. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.



"Cloning is an imperfect science."

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the report. But Rather always tries to be gracious, and he did talk about it. Four CBS employees who were close to him were fired or asked to leave in the wake of the panel's findings, and Rather seemed to compare them to the Spartans. "To people who have been so loyal and true, I'm not going to give up on them," he said, then continued, "I appeared before the panel two times for a total of eleven hours. Both times, I told the panel that if I had to move this afternoon on a big story, one that had the potential of being controversial, I'd be very happy to go on that story with the same people, each and every one."

Normally, Dan Rather is driven from his apartment, on the Upper East Side, to his office, at CBS headquarters, on West Fifty-seventh Street, sometime in the late morning. On Friday, January 14th, when I spent the day with him, he arrived at his office, on the second floor, before nine. He hung up his suit jacket, and walked downstairs to what's known as "the fishbowl," where those who work in the main newsroom can watch senior producers assembling the nightly newscast. Before I arrived, a staff member warned me to expect "a full Rothenberg," a performance named for a former Associated Press television writer, for whom Rather once pretended to be more involved in shaping the daily broadcast—barking orders, assigning stories, writing copy—than he actually was. In reality, most news decisions are made by the executive producer; in the A.P. story, he seemed like a combination of Perry White and Jimmy Olsen.

As it turned out, I witnessed a modified version of the full Rothenberg. Rather moved about jacketless, his shirt collar open, his tie askew. His gray sideburns are unfashionably long, and his hair is short, making his large, slightly pointy ears more prominent. Rather's cleft chin is not as pronounced as it appears on television screens, and the circles under his eyes are deep. He is seventy-three but looks younger. Standing behind Murphy, the executive producer, who was staring at a computer monitor, Rather asked, eagerly, "What's the big story?"

Murphy, who wears small rimless glasses and has a full mustache, never took his eyes off the lineup on his screen; in the end, there would be nine or so pieces, running from ninety seconds to two and a half minutes, and a dozen or so news reports called "tells," which the anchor reads. "It looks like Iraq," Murphy said briskly. The Iraq story would consist of a package of two or three segments, he said, including one on a C.I.A. analysis featured in that morning's *Times*, and a report from David Martin, the chief national-security correspondent, who was travelling with United States troops in Tikrit. There would also be a report from Indonesia, Murphy said. Today was Murphy's fifth anniversary as Rather's executive producer; he's had the longest tenure of any of Rather's executive-producer partners, and the two men are usually in synch.

Rather was now pacing the floor like an admiral on the deck. He said, "I still don't think we've done justice on the air to an Indonesian overview" of how the Muslim government is suspicious of Western aid and yet grateful for it. "Then, there's the corruption business, whether money may be scraped off." Murphy and the other producers listened, but they responded only with silent nods. Finally, Rather said to Murphy, "I'm not saying we got to get to all that today, but I'm looking for a wide shot." Pausing, his arms folded, Rather asked, "What else?"

Still without looking up from his screen, Murphy mentioned floods in the Midwest, and said that there would be a correspondent and a producer on the scene that morning. A telephone rang, and Rather lunged for it: "Evening news. Rather." The call was from Mike Solmsen, a field producer in Indonesia, who, obviously surprised, asked, "Who is this?"

"This is Dan Rather."

Solmsen asked Rather to tell the producers that he would complete his story script in an hour.

"Murphy says you're in," Rather said, and asked Solmsen to relay a message to the correspondent Byron Pitts. "Remind Pitts of the Rather Rule," he said. "Don't drink the water. Don't eat the meat. O.K. Go hard." Rather was approaching a full Rothenberg moment.

Each morning, Murphy and the other producers go through a stack of newspapers on their desks. Rather mentioned a story in the *Christian Science Monitor* on the separatist rebels on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Since there were no pictures, Murphy said he was dubious. Rather conceded, "It's a tough story for television." And so they moved on.

The phone rang again and Rather lunged for it: "Rather." This caller was also startled to hear Rather's voice, and Rather again had to explain who he was: "It's Dan Rather." This was a slow news day. "Good day to break a story," Rather said.

Rather asked Murphy, "What about the end piece? What are you thinking?" The story that closes the broadcast is usually a feature. Murphy called up a tape of a piece about how Iran is now, in the words of the correspondent Elizabeth Palmer, "the nose-job capital of the world," where young men and women go for plastic surgery, paying thousands of dollars for a procedure. Rather asked, "How long is it?"

"It's a little longish," Murphy said, "but, just like a nose, it can be trimmed."

Rather again began to pace, and returned to the beginning of the broadcast. Although he made his reputation reporting on hurricanes, and still delights in covering them, he wasn't sure that one of the nine full stories that evening should be floods in the Midwest. Murphy thought the floods merited a story because thousands of Ohio residents had been ordered to evacuate.

Rather returned to his office at around nine-fifteen, and an hour later was back in the fishbowl. "What about the conference call?" Rather asked as he entered, referring to a call made every morning to CBS's bureau chiefs.

"We did it already," said Murphy, who knew that Rather often skips this meeting. Unfazed, Rather asked, "So, Jimmy, if we had to choose a lead now what would it be?"

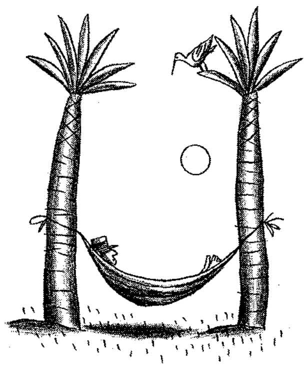
"Iraq," Murphy said, just as he had earlier.

The average age of the people who watch the news on the three networks is sixty; only eight or nine per cent are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. All three programs, with their repeated focus on health issues, interspersed with commercials for products like Mylanta and Viagra, reflect this. The content of the news is also similar. The year-end Tyndall Report, which monitors the three broadcasts, reported that CBS devoted more minutes to Iraq and slightly fewer to the Presidential campaign of John Kerry; during the Summer Olympics, NBC, whose sports division owned the rights, devoted nearly twice as many minutes of its newscast (a hundred and twelve) to the Olympics as did CBS and ABC combined. But, by Tyndall's calculations, the minutes that each network devoted to such stories as terrorism in Iraq, the Presidential debates, and the Bush campaign were so close that they seemed to share a single assignment editor. CBS News is budgeted at about five hundred million dollars, ABC at about six hundred million, and NBC and MSNBC combined at about six hundred million. Each network employs between eighty and a hundred and ten or so correspondents, including anchors. ABC News earns just under a hundred million dollars and CBS somewhat less, while NBC earns about two hundred and seventy million dollars. (NBC has two cable news outlets; MSNBC barely breaks even, while its business network, CNBC, earns nearly three hundred million dollars.)

In December, the former CBS correspondent Bill Moyers said, "What's happened to the house that Murrow built?" Edward R. Murrow, who was at CBS between 1935 and 1961, remains a CBS icon. "It's now a shack on the side of the road." Moyers was referring to cutbacks at all the networks not only in foreign bureaus and correspondents but in the air time given to serious stories.

"I know he's wrong," Rather said. "I recognize his frustration, maybe even anger." He added, "What can I say? I love Bill." Comparing the broadcast to what it was decades earlier, Rather said, "We had more resources in more places. We could move faster and better with fewer budget constraints. On the other hand, I think the broadcasts are better written now. They cover a wider range of news than they did then." Rather and news executives at all three networks say that, because of advances in communications technology, coverage is often better than it used to be.

Walter Cronkite, who is eighty-eight, still has an office and a staff of four at CBS's headquarters; he has a consultant's contract, though he says he is not consulted. Cronkite doesn't want the evening news to present a mixture of stories, the way a magazine does, because, he points out, there is too little time in a news broadcast—on CBS, about nineteen minutes, after commercials and promotions for upcoming stories and the local stations. One such promotion, featured by CBS in its December 15th broadcast, showed an irate Orlando mother striking a teen-ager on a school bus. This footage was promoted at the beginning of the broadcast and at each commercial break, suggesting to viewers that if they endured stories on Iraq and Social Security they would be rewarded with pictures of a good brawl. Bob Schieffer says, "When I came to work at CBS, CBS News was not a profit center. Now it is." He went on, "CBS News has never been a charitable enterprise. But I think the effort to find a larger audience is driving this thing. Some people think the way to do that is to make it more entertaining. I, frankly, don't."



Since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the networks have devoted more time to overseas news. Yet today Barry Peterson, a CBS correspondent based primarily in Tokyo, is responsible for covering all of Asia. CBS News usually has nine other correspondents based overseas—five in a hub office in London, three in Tel Aviv, one in Rome. It has no permanent bureau in the Arab or Muslim world, in Africa or South America. The network has small offices, although not correspondents, in several countries. Tom Fenton, who is seventy-four and had a thirty-four-year career, mainly as a foreign correspondent with CBS, writes in a new book, "Bad News," that in the late seventies and early eighties "CBS News ran fourteen major foreign bureaus, ten mini foreign bureaus, and stringers in forty-four countries around the world." Now, he told me, CBS relies increasingly on information supplied by video wire services and overseas broadcasters. "It's television's equivalent of outsourcing."

Marcy McGinnis, who has been with CBS for nearly thirty-five years and is a senior vice-president for news coverage, thinks that critics like Fenton don't count the approximately twenty-five people (including producers, technicians, local arrangers, and security details) that CBS has in Iraq. They don't, she says, count CBS's stake in a European satellite consortium, which has thirty-two separate broadcasters contributing pictures and information, or its satellite partners in other parts of the world. (In fact, this sounds suspiciously like outsourcing.) "We now cover the world better than we ever did," she says.

McGinnis did not mention newspapers, but often a front-page story in that morning's *Times* appears near the top of a newscast. "It's in your own city, so it's easy," said Susan Zirinsky, a CBS executive producer, who thinks that such shortcuts too often replace "enterprise reporting." Andy Rooney, who joined CBS as a writer forty-four years ago, and who has also been a news producer, says, "It's infuriating. If it wasn't for the New York *Times*, network news would have to shut down."

At first, Rather reacts to this debate by expressing support for the good intentions of CBS managers. But, when I asked how he thought Murrow would feel about CBS's having fewer correspondents and bureaus than it did a quarter century ago, Rather replied, "He wouldn't feel good about it. Neither do I." When I asked if he really believed that CBS News covered the world, he said, "I always believe it can be done. I remain committed to both the idea and the ideal that whatever shortcomings, real or imagined, anybody thinks we have in resources, money, that we can make up for it with determination and being smart and getting the very most out of the resources we have. I certainly don't want to be trivial—about this I'm serious—but in this case I really believe in 'The Little Engine That Could'; that is, *I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.*"

Dan Rather has always been sentimental, but it's more evident now, no doubt because his final day as the anchor of the "CBS Evening News" is near. Late in the morning on the day I spent with him, Rather headed across the street to screen a piece for "60 Minutes Wednesday," and I went to another screening room to view clips from a one-hour tribute to him that was being put together by Susan Zirinsky. It will air on March 9th. (When Tom Brokaw stepped down as anchor, in December, NBC News treated his leaving much like the retirement of a head of state, and gave it a two-hour special.)

Thirty years ago, as a production secretary in the Washington bureau, Zirinsky typed the manuscript of one of Rather's books, "The Palace Guard." Since then, she has been his producer in the field and on the "CBS Evening News," and his executive producer on "48 Hours," which, now called "48 Hours Mystery" and increasingly tabloid, she continues to produce. Zirinsky, who was the model for the producer played by Holly Hunter in the movie "Broadcast News," is an unabashed Rather admirer. "A lot of people know Dan, and nobody knows him," she says.

The clips show Rather as a newsman in Texas and in locales around America and the world. One sees Rather as a thin young man on Houston's KHOU-TV, referring repeatedly to "Hurri-*cun* Carla"; hears Rather in a voice-over as Governor George Wallace attempts to halt integration at the University of Alabama; watches Rather crouching in a swamp in Tam Ky, to give a report as he trails marines in Vietnam, and helping to carry a wounded marine on a stretcher from a battlefield, while whispering to his producer not to include this footage in the broadcast. (It was included.)

Dan Irvin Rather was born in Wharton, an oil-patch town near the east coast of Texas, on October 31, 1931. The family moved to Houston when he was a year old, and the Rathers had two more children—Don, who recently retired as a football coach in Texas, and Patricia, who taught school in Texas, and who is also retired. The father, Daniel Irvin Rather, was a second-generation pipe layer for oil companies. Veda Byrl Rather, Dan's mother, worked at odd jobs to earn extra income, but concentrated on rearing her children. In Wharton, they lived in a "shotgun house," a cut above a shack but so named because the houses are "so small that you can hit everybody in the place with one shotgun blast," Rather wrote in "I Remember: Growing Up in Texas," one of three memoirs he's written. In Houston, the Rather family had a slightly bigger house, and went to a Baptist church. Dan shared a bed with his brother, and his mother had to walk three miles round trip to the grocery store. Rather recalls that his father was so loyal to his employer, Humble Pipeline, that he refused to frequent any other company's gas station. His mother, he says, was a natural diplomat and yet, quick to read people, she would occasionally say, "I don't trust him." "It wasn't quite like living in Erskine Caldwell's territory, but his 'Tobacco Road' wasn't all that different," he wrote.

Rather's father and mother loved F.D.R. "I can hear my father saying, 'We are the government,'" Rather told me. When Dan was ten, he came down with rheumatic fever. The radio became his companion. He listened to Jack Benny's pauses, and practiced them. But what most excited him was listening to Murrow and his "boys"—William Shirer, Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood—as they reported the Second World War.

Rather was the first member of his family to finish college. At Sam Houston State Teachers College, he took journalism courses and worked part time as an apprentice sportscaster for the college radio station. "I became a pretty good ad libber, because there's no script," Rather said. A journalism instructor, Hugh Cunningham, advised him to practice interviews and to read important books that his education had missed. He finished college in three years, graduating in August, 1953.

During the Korean War, Rather joined the Marines. He was discharged six months later, when the Corps learned that he had had rheumatic fever. He moved back to Houston and, for the next five years, held a succession of jobs for United Press International, the Houston *Chronicle*, and a radio station. He worked six days a week at the station, and persuaded his station manager to start a Sunday broadcast, featuring Dan Rather. "He gave up his only day off," a college friend, Perry Smith, recalls. "We all thought he was nuts."

In 1956, he met Jean Grace Goebel, when she was hired as a secretary at the radio station, and they were married within a year. "She was beautiful, and had a smile as wide as Texas," Rather recalled. A daughter, Robin, was born in 1958; a son, Danjack, two years later. He joined Houston's KHOU-TV, a CBS affiliate, as news director in January, 1960.

CBS first took notice of Rather—and of a talent he had for dramatizing himself and his stories—when Hurricane Carla hit and KHOU was the only station broadcasting from Galveston. "I remember he had himself tied to a telephone pole so he could continue to do his reporting even as the wind got more dangerous," Walter Cronkite told me. "That was a reportorial stunt that certainly caught everyone's eye, I think. And he did a darn good job of it." Rather did not, in fact, tie himself to a pole, although he did get a heavy-link chain and rehearsed tying himself to a tree. Cronkite remembers recommending Rather to CBS executives.

CBS News offered Rather a job in 1961. He was paid an annual salary of seventeen thousand two hundred dollars—about seven thousand dollars more than he had been making—and assigned to the Dallas-based Southwest bureau. His father was impressed, but did not live to experience much of his son's success; a few months later, a teen-ager driving a concrete truck slammed into his car. "It killed him instantly," Rather says. Daniel Irvin Rather was fifty-two.

Rather became CBS's Southern bureau chief, and was continuously on the road. On November 22, 1963, he was in Dallas and reported the assassination of President Kennedy. He received a series of promotions, first to the White House to cover Lyndon B. Johnson, and then, in 1965, to London, as bureau chief. Rather was able to ingratiate himself with two of Murrow's boys. He asked the CBS commentator Eric Sevareid to recommend books on politics and history, and from the elegant Charles Collingwood he got a London tailor. He went to Vietnam the following year, where he replaced Morley Safer for about nine months. When Safer returned to Saigon, in August of 1966, Rather invited him for a drink in the bar of the Caravelle. Safer describes this encounter in his 1990 memoir, "Flashbacks":

> The man was trying very hard to be courtly, but the effect was destroyed by the strange way he was dressed. It was not the green army fatigues and combat boots—though it was most unusual for correspondents to be dressed for war in Saigon—it was the leather shoulder holster and nickel-plated Smith and Wesson .38 caliber revolver strapped on the outside of his clothing.

Rather denies the incident and says that he never owned a gun in Vietnam. Other differences followed. Eventually, hearing that Rather had disparaged his reporting, Safer stopped speaking to him. For years, they passed each other silently in the corridors at CBS. There was "an iciness," Safer says. Rather says that they are now amicable colleagues; "perfectly proper" is how Safer describes the relationship.

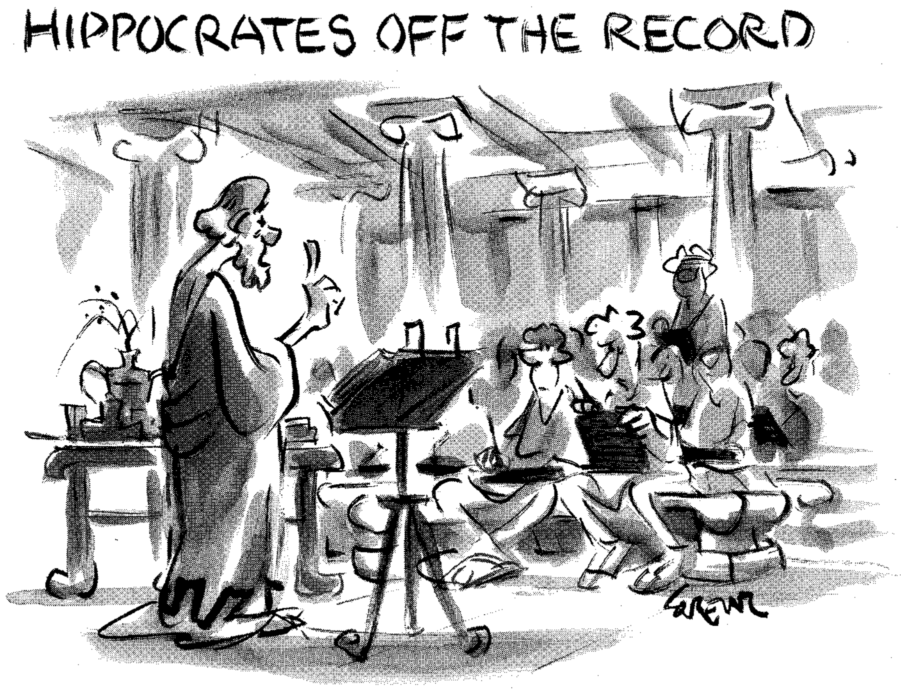
When Rather returned to the United States, he became CBS's chief White House correspondent, and covered the final two years of the Johnson Administration and the nearly six years of the Nixon Administration—the years of Vietnam protests and the Watergate scandal. At the height of Watergate, in March of 1974, at the National Association of Broadcasters convention in Houston, Rather was called on by Nixon to ask a question. It was Rather's home town, and members of the audience applauded. Nixon drew a laugh by saying, "Are you running for something?"

Rather quickly responded, "No, sir, Mr. President. Are you?"

Over the years, that exchange has been seen as evidence of an alleged political bias on Rather's part; and Rather still believes that pressure on the network frightened CBS executives. There were complaints from CBS stations and calls from the White House to the CBS chairman, William Paley, and his executives, and in August of 1974 (the month Nixon resigned) Rather was replaced by Bob Schieffer. He came to New York and was the anchor for many "CBS Reports" documentaries.

The face and voice of CBS, however, was then Walter Cronkite, who was wary of Rather. He respected him for being "dogged" in his reporting, he recalls, but worried that he was "showboating." Rather was in any case something new in network news: a star not because his name and his face were before millions of viewers nightly but because of his performance. When Rather covered a hurricane, he became as much a part of the story as the storm.

Cronkite intended to step down before he turned sixty-five, in 1981. Roone Arledge, the news president of ABC, tried to lure Rather to ABC, to become the anchor there, but, Rather told me, he couldn't leave. "I believe in the dream, the magical, mystical kingdom of CBS News," he said. "It may exist only in our minds, but that makes it no less real." Chosen as Cronkite's replacement, Rather had a plan to stamp his own personality on the broadcast. "I was determined to be a reporter-anchor," he said, and he popularized the anchor-as-reporter by taking the evening news on the road—to, among other places, Tiananmen Square, Cuba, and, when the Soviet Union was disintegrating, Moscow. (Tom Bettag, who was Rather's executive producer at CBS and is now the senior executive producer of ABC's "Nightline," remembers Tom Brokaw saying jokingly to Rather as they travelled to Czechoslovakia, "I swear to God, I'm going to kill you if



"First, treat no lawyers."

you go to Romania if it falls!") Some of Rather's other ideas were perceived as weird. Perhaps too eager to prove that he was his own man, Rather would deliver the news standing up; to soften his image, he wore a sweater on the set. Cronkite's broadcast had ranked first from 1968 until he left, and Rather clung to the lead until 1988, when Peter Jennings, of ABC's "World News Tonight," overtook him.

Controversy continued to pursue Rather. After Lawrence Tisch bought CBS, in 1986, Rather spoke out against Tisch's plan to reduce news spending by ten per cent and to fire two hundred and fifteen news employees. His criticism was featured on the Op-Ed page of the *Times.* For a week in the fall of 1986, Rather concluded the newscast with a single word—"Courage"—and when he explained that "courage" was his father's favorite word, people thought he was, well, a little nuts. Around the same time, Rather said he was mugged by a stranger on Park Avenue who, before punching him, asked, "Kenneth, what is the frequency?"—an episode so peculiar that it put Rather in the tabloids. (Years later, people still spoke of this encounter as if it had never really happened, and when, in 1997, it was announced that the police had the deranged culprit in custody the story drew relatively scant coverage.) People also considered the CBS anchor a little strange because of the Ratherisms, many of which have been compiled and published on the Web and elsewhere. An informal sampling since 2000 might include these:

"One's reminded of that old saying 'Don't taunt the alligator until after you've crossed the creek.' "

"If a frog had side pockets, he'd carry a handgun."

"In Southern states they beat him like a rented mule."

"This race is as hot and tight as a too-small bathing suit on a too-long car ride home from the beach."

"If California is the big burrito, and Texas is the big taco, then Florida is the big tamale . . . and right now it's only the tamale that counts."

In Miami in 1987, Rather, upset that CBS was delaying the start of the "Evening News" to stay with U.S. Open tennis coverage, stalked off the set. He called the president of the news division, and, while he was away, the match ended and the sports people turned the broadcast over to news. The screen then went blank for six minutes.

The next year, in an interview with Vice-President George H. W. Bush, Rather pressed him about the Iran-Contra scandal, and Bush, whose advisers had prepared a response for him, said, "It's not fair to judge my whole career by a rehash on Iran. How would you like it if I judged your career by those seven minutes when you walked off the set?"

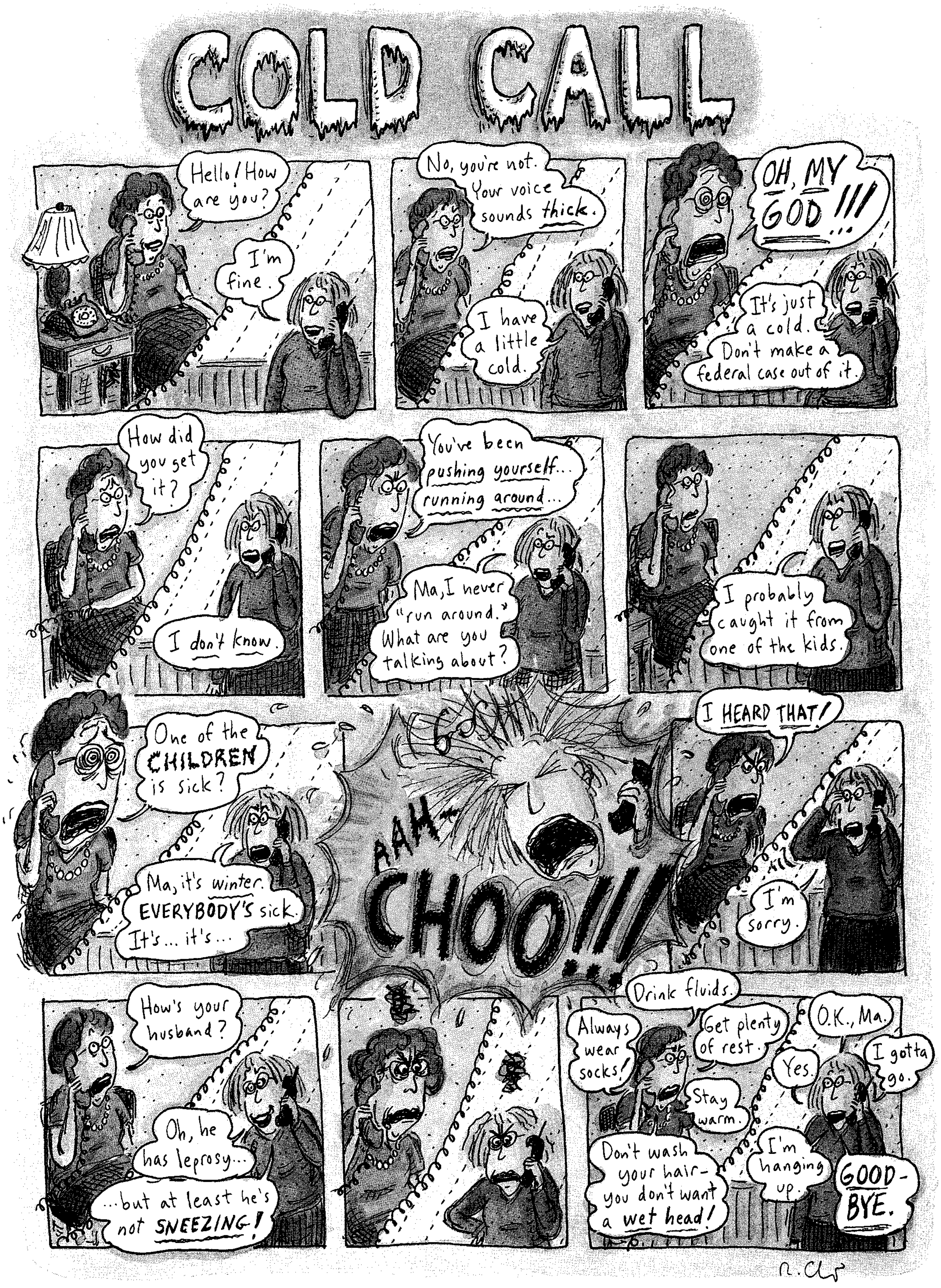
The Bushes never quite forgave Rather, and the episode strengthened the belief of many conservatives that Rather was biased. In 2000, a new Web site, RatherBiased.com, began posting Rather's alleged sins, including his supposedly gentler treatment of Democrats and the allegedly soft questions he asked Saddam Hussein during an exclusive interview in 2003. Bernard Goldberg, a former CBS correspondent, has written two books, both best-sellers, arguing that there is an insular, liberal bias at the networks, and Andy Rooney, a liberal himself, has told Larry King that "Dan is transparently liberal." Jeff Fager, to whom Rooney reports on "60 Minutes," and who was Rather's executive producer on the "Evening News," thinks that critics confuse bias for a good story with political bias. "He wakes up every day and wonders, Where's my next big story?" Fager said.

Rather certainly brings an attitude to the news. "I have tried to speak truth to power," he says, and adds a Ratherism: "I do have my biases, such as, I'm hard to herd and impossible to stampede."

The network anchors are preposterously well paid. Rather earns about seven million dollars a year, and Peter Jennings about ten million. Brian Williams, on NBC, earns about ten million, and Katie Couric, of NBC, and Diane Sawyer, of ABC, between twelve and fifteen million each. While Jennings overtook Rather for first place in 1988, in the mid-nineties NBC's "Nightly News," with Tom Brokaw, overtook Jennings. Some think that Rather's third-place standing is CBS's fault, because it has afternoon- and local-news lead-ins that don't deliver an audience to Rather. Rather clearly believes this. "Whatever you think of our present broadcast, and whatever you may think of me," Rather said, "if you put Oprah Winfrey in front of me and one of the strong access programs behind me"—he cited "Wheel of Fortune"—"then I'll win for you." But the Rather factor is measurable. Twice a year, a firm called Marketing Evaluations produces for subscribers what is known as Performer Q Scores, which divide the percentage of the public that rates a personality "one of my favorites" by the percentage of the public aware of the personality. Rather's Positive Q Score is comparable to that of his counterparts. Where one sees a bigger difference is in Rather's Negative Q Score, which is more than twenty-five per cent higher than either Brokaw's or Jennings's. The only prominent news person with a higher negative rating than Rather is Katie Couric.

David Poltrack, CBS's executive vice-president for research and planning, conceded that in recent years CBS has lost conservative, older male viewers to NBC because they were "unhappy with our coverage." He continued, "The conservative part of this country, while talking about the liberal bias of the networks and the New York media, tends to speak more of Dan Rather representing that." The "60 Minutes" correspondent Mike Wallace, who considers Rather a friend, says that Rather's style reinforces the impression of bias. "Rather is a superb reporter, and dead honest," Wallace told me. "But he's not as easy to watch as Jennings or Brokaw." Wallace does not watch Rather. "He's uptight, and occasionally contrived," Wallace explained. "It's his style, and it's been a very effective style. God knows, I believe him. But I don't find him as satisfying to watch."

Cronkite, who said that he often watched Brokaw, agreed with Wallace. To viewers, he said, it seemed "that Dan was playing a role of newsman, that he was conscious of this, whereas the other two appeared to be more the third-party reporter." Don Hewitt, who created "60 Minutes," and who prefers to watch Jennings, believes that ratings success is linked to the personality of the anchor. "The 'Evening News' is like Miss America, only it's Mr. America," he said. "If you're in a three-network race and you come in third, then the public is against you." In contrast to Brokaw and Jen-


COLD CALL
Hello! How are you?
I'm fine.
No, you're not. Your voice sounds thick.
I have a little cold.
OH, MY GOD!!!
It's just a cold. Don't make a federal case out of it.
How did you get it?
I don't know.
You've been pushing yourself... running around...
Ma, I never "run around." What are you talking about?
I probably caught it from one of the kids.
One of the CHILDREN is sick?
Ma, it's winter. EVERYBODY'S sick. It's... it's...
AAH-CHOO!!!
I HEARD THAT!
I'm sorry.
How's your husband?
Oh, he has leprosy...
...but at least he's not SNEEZING!
Drink fluids.
Always wear socks!
Get plenty of rest.
Stay warm.
Don't wash your hair—you don't want a wet head!
O.K., Ma.
Yes.
I gotta go.
I'm hanging up.
GOOD-BYE.
R. Chast

nings, Rather makes some viewers uncomfortable because he conveys discomfort with the camera.

Many of Rather's friends and associates agree about one source of his discomfort: he feels trapped in the anchor chair. Howard Stringer, the chairman and C.E.O. of Sony America, who was Rather's executive producer in the early eighties and then the president of CBS, says, "There is a certain frustration about his real contribution. He admired a reporter like Edward R. Murrow, out in the field, dodging bombs, not just sitting in a studio chair." Andy Rooney believes that Rather is on the road so often because he's ashamed of anchoring—"a dumb job." Rooney explained, "To gain some credibility, they all feel obliged to go out and stand in the wind. They should either accept their role as a news reader or become a reporter."

Rather has never been able to hide his emotions, including an almost reverential patriotism; after September 11th, on David Letterman's show, he cried as he recited a verse from "America the Beautiful." At a Harvard forum last July, Rather addressed a question about whether the press could have been more skeptical of the Bush Administration's claims that Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction. He said yes but added, "Look, when a President of the United States, any President, Republican or Democrat, says these are the facts, there is heavy prejudice, including my own, to give him the benefit of any doubt, and for that I do not apologize."

Andy Rooney calls Rather "a Southern gentleman." "Loyalty" is the first word that comes to Richard Leibner, of N.S. Bienstock, Rather's television agent. "How many people have had the same representative for forty years?" Leibner says. His father, Sol Leibner, died the day after September 11th, he recalls, at the age of ninety-two. Air traffic in and out of New York was suspended, and the family delayed a Long Island graveside service for five days. "Dan had worked around the clock Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. I had called Jean Rather and said, 'Dan shouldn't be there.' Dan left the newsroom with Jean, stood at the cemetery, spoke at the graveside, and went back to the broadcast center. That's who he is." Peter Jennings says, "If I got in trouble anywhere in the world, and I had twenty-five cents, I would call Barbara"—Barbara Walters. "Then I'd call Dan."

Back in the fishbowl at 2:30 P.M. on January 14th, Rather, Murphy, and others reviewed the mix of stories yet again. Arms folded, Rather offered Murphy a wager that ABC and NBC would lead with the weather. Murphy disagreed, and went down his list to a medical piece on statins.

"What's gonna keep this piece from looking like another 'Oh my God, another medical piece'?" Rather asked, not looking at Murphy or at me. (Earlier, I had asked Rather if there was a glut of "we're on your side" medical stories.)

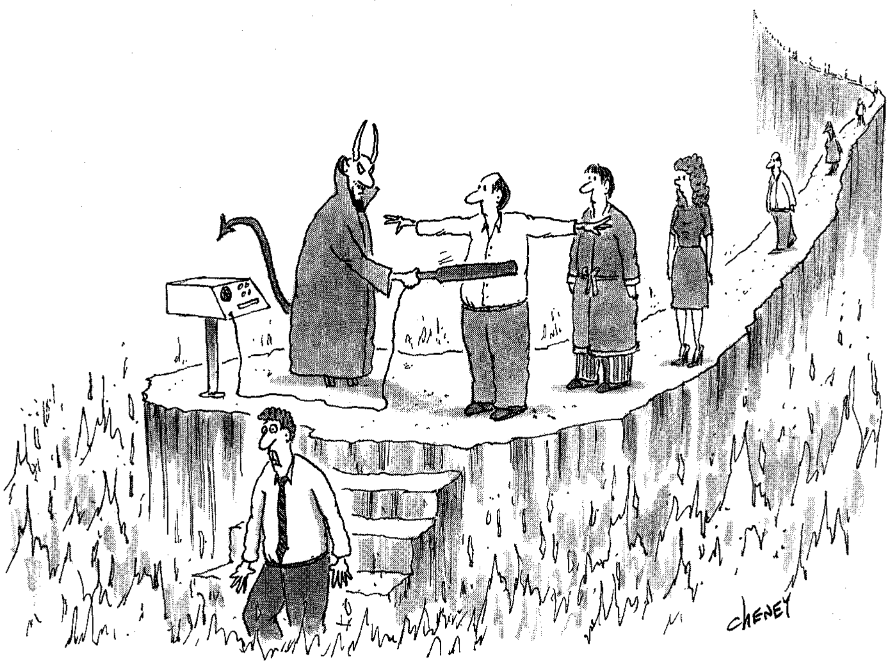
"We'll do something clever," one producer said.

"Let's roll on," Rather said. "Just know that I have some concern about 'just another health piece.'"

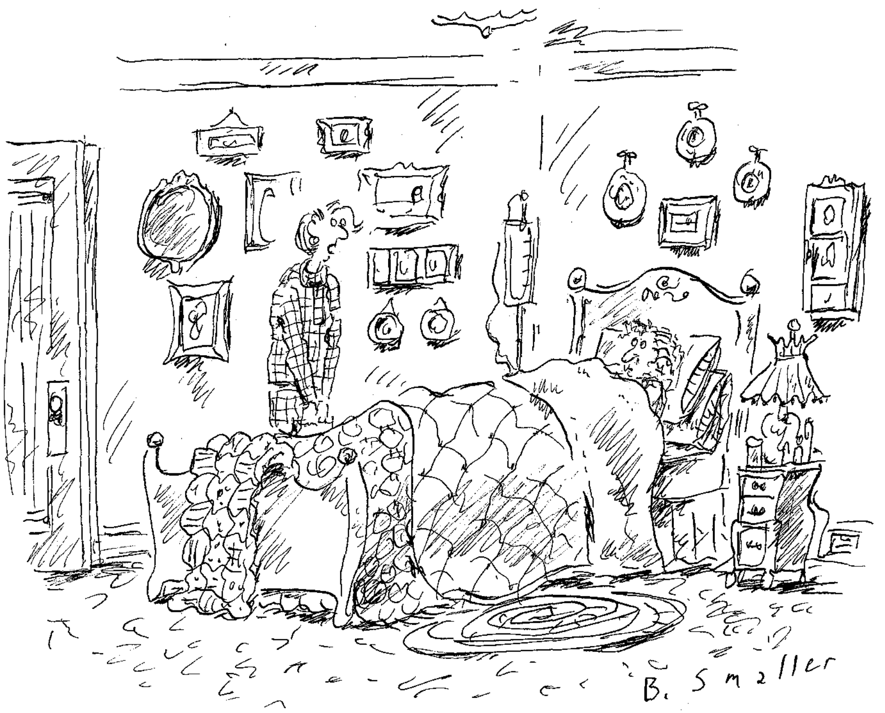
Murphy said that a verdict was expected that afternoon in the military trial of Specialist Charles A. Graner, Jr., who was charged with abusing prisoners at Abu Ghraib; the plan was to explain the verdict in a twenty-second "tell," Murphy said. There was another Middle East story (about Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon) that would make the front pages of the next day's newspapers, but, without pictures, it rated only a "tell." A moment later, Rather told me, "The broadcast as set today I would say probably would not be the broadcast that the front office would ideally like. Not quite enough consumer news. Leading with something that is foreign or semi-foreign: Iraq and intelligence."

Finally, Murphy talked about the new end piece, replacing Iranian rhinoplasty: a mentally disabled shoeshine man at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, who for decades had donated every cent he'd earned in tips to the hospital. It was exactly the kind of story "the front office" likes to end the week with, Rather said. "The big guys are not here," Murphy chimed in, referring to Heyward and Moonves. "They're three thousand miles away."

The exchange was playful, but the anxiety in the newsroom was palpable; everyone knew that Heyward had gone to Los Angeles to present to Moonves his ideas for a re-formatted "CBS Evening News." And everyone knew that Moonves was in competition with Tom Freston, the co-president of Viacom, to one day succeed Sumner Redstone as C.E.O. Ratings and profits will be an important measure of Moonves's success, and Moonves has always known this. In late 2001, when I was reporting another piece on the networks, he told me, "The networks went through change when they went from being just networks to becoming part of larger corporations. The news division, for what was spent, was bringing less return than other areas of the company. . . . Earnings is what I'm judged on." Moonves had programmed the comeback of CBS's prime-time schedule, with such hits as "Survivor" and "C.S.I.," and



lowered the average age of its viewers. Moonves and Heyward agree that Rather's departure offers an opportunity to make bold changes, and Moonves has told associates that a new plan for the "CBS Evening News" is now his top priority.



"If I could pick just one keepsake, I think it would be the mutual funds."

Because of the investigation of the National Guard story, and because Heyward, starting in the summer, had joined Moonves in pressing Rather to step down early, tension had crept into the relationship between Rather and Heyward, as it had crept into the relationships between Heyward and other employees. Heyward is fifty-four and sports a thick salt-and-pepper mustache. He has spent his career at CBS, as a writer and a producer. He has held his current job for nine years. There are those who, like Jim Murphy, believe that he "has done an exceptional job of keeping this place together." But many fault him for failing to groom a successor to Rather. They say that he has been afraid of Rather. Above all, they grumble that he represents *them*—the corporation.

"Heyward ain't Dick Salant," Mike Wallace told me. "I trusted Salant, totally. I don't know that I've ever felt that way about not just Heyward but other news presidents who represented management. Corporate management hated Salant because he told them the truth."

According to Hayward, four decades ago the news division wasn't held to the same business standards as the rest of the corporation. Today, any news president is "expected to generate profits and not just prestige," he says. "And, like it or not—I do like it—has to contend with ratings, marketing, promotion, prime-time schedules, affiliates: the economic business realities of being part of a large media company. I think I've helped the news division by being a savvy corporate citizen." Among many news employees, the impulse to want a bolder leader is balanced by a fear that Heyward would be replaced by a stranger who knows neither them nor CBS's traditions.

Before Moonves met with Heyward in Los Angeles, Moonves told me, "Badly as our evening news is doing, it's still watched by seven to eight million people a night. That's still a lot of people. So, clearly, the idea that this thing is obsolete is silly." But he was ready to gamble on a big change because "being in third place affords you great leeway." Heyward believed that CBS could break away from the pack by becoming less "anchor-centric." He was going to propose building up the role of the correspondents and granting them more on-air time for each piece, which meant subtracting time from the anchor. Heyward wanted more in-depth reports, and also he wanted correspondents to inject more personality, more emotion, into their pieces. His model was "that guy"—he pointed to a picture of Murrow—"taking you to the roof during the blitz."

Peter Jennings worries that by encouraging correspondents to voice their feelings we encourage them to search for those emotional "moments" that can eclipse reporting or ideas. "People say I'm too aloof," he said. "In some ways, that's a compliment. It is not my emotions that matter on a story. It is the emotions of the people we're covering. Edward R. Murrow used to go up on the rooftops of London. Do you think his aim was to let Americans know how he was feeling? His aim was to let the American people know how the people of London survived." At the heart of Heyward's proposal, however, was something that television journalists always want: more time for correspondents to offer more information and more context.

What Moonves sought for news, an associate told me, was "a more entertaining, faster paced" newscast, one that might attract more forty-five-year-olds—not the approach favored by Heyward and other CBS News executives. And, short of hiring someone who might draw a different audience—Katie Couric, for instance—Moonves's inclination was to move toward multiple anchors. The chief White House correspondent, John Roberts, would probably be part of this mix, but it wasn't clear to Moonves that all the candidates would come from inside CBS.

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What was clear to Rather on January 14th—and clear to almost everyone else at CBS News—was that Moonves, the president of CBS, not Heyward, the president of news, would be making the final decisions. A story spread about a meeting that Moonves had once organized with Heyward; Betsy West, Heyward's deputy; and the three producers of CBS's magazine shows at the time—Don Hewitt, Jeff Fager, and Susan Zirinsky. Moonves was agitated that Barbara Walters and Diane Sawyer, of ABC, were persuading Jennifer Lopez and other celebrities to appear on their magazine shows, while CBS was not. He kept asking, one producer recalls, "Are

"I think that once we invented finger food we pretty much took it easy."

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you dead? Why shouldn't you guys be going after that stuff?"

"We don't make deals with celebrities on what we may ask, nor do we promise them anything," Hewitt said. (He reluctantly confirmed the substance of the meeting.)

Moonves mentioned other celebrity names, including Justin Timberlake.

"Who's Justin Timberlake?" Hewitt asked.

Moonves, who also confirmed that the meeting took place, told me, "I don't expect '60 Minutes' to go out and do Jennifer Lopez. However, there is a place for that on the magazines on occasion. Do we at CBS consider that we're above that?" He insists that it was "an exploratory meeting," albeit "very positive." And he added, "Yes, I am interested in getting good ratings. It helps the bottom line, and it helps the company."

Rather and one of his longtime "60 Minutes Wednesday" producers, Mary Mapes, were among the many journalists who had looked into reports that George W. Bush used influence to get into the Texas Air National Guard in 1968 and cut corners while he served. All "60 Minutes" correspondents depend on their producers; a correspondent may appear in twenty-five pieces a year, but a producer reports only four or five in the same period. And Mapes was much admired for her previous work, especially the story of American soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.

When, last August, Mapes told Josh Howard, the new executive producer of "60 Minutes Wednesday," that she had sensational new information about Bush's military record, he was excited, as was Rather, according to the outside investigation. No one had to remind Howard that the Wednesday program was up for review when the prime-time schedule was set last May, and was given an extended life only on orders from Moonves.

By early September, Mapes was telling Rather and Howard that she had three documents, dating back to 1972, proving that Bush had failed to show up or take a required physical, and had been suspended from flying. Moreover, she said, a fourth document proved that senior officers had covered up these failures. But she was alarmed about competitors, including *USA Today,* who were pursuing the same documents, and she quickly arranged for four experts to authenticate them. Josh Howard tentatively decided that the National Guard story would replace an Ed Bradley report produced by one of the network's top investigators, David Gelber, which explored how the Bush Administration had used bad intelligence—a document saying that Iraq was trying to get so-called yellow-cake uranium from Niger, to make an atom bomb—to promote its case for an invasion of Iraq. The story was not new, but the reporting was considered fresh.

Rather had spent four days covering the Republican National Convention in New York, then three days in Florida covering Hurricane Frances. Four days before the National Guard program was to air, Rather said, he alerted Heyward that this was a potentially "radioactive" story. Heyward assigned Betsy West to vet it.

Heyward told me that if the Rather piece hadn't been ready the Ed Bradley piece would not have been a last-minute substitute, because it ran twice the normal length. Bradley disputes that, insisting that David Gelber told him "he was kept until late in the day on the eighth on the possibility that the piece would run." He also said that the piece was mixed and color-corrected, the two final procedures to ready a story for broadcast.

In any case, Rather got the broadcast, and he told viewers that CBS had dug up "new documents and new information" revealing that Bush had benefitted from political favors to avoid the draft. Part of the story was the interview with Ben Barnes. But the rest of the report relied on the documents, and, within hours, the Internet was filled with assertions that they were fake. Although the challenges continued, and rival news organizations produced experts questioning the documents' authenticity, CBS and Rather didn't budge. Backed by Rather, Mapes produced pieces for "CBS Evening News" on September 10th and 13th, and for the September 15th "60 Minutes Wednesday" in which Rather offered more "proof" in defense of the original story. After twelve days, Heyward reversed course and issued a statement on CBS's behalf: "Based on what we now know, CBS News cannot prove that the documents are authentic. . . . We should not have used them. That was a mistake, which we deeply regret." Rather opposed the Heyward apology, but on the evening news he apologized for failing to "fully scrutinize the documents and their source."

On September 22nd, Moonves appointed the outside panel, called the Independent Review Panel. It included Louis D. Boccardi, a former journalist and the retired C.E.O. of the Associated Press; and former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, a Republican, who had served under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. The panel was directed to report its findings to Moonves, not to CBS News.

Rather was not happy about the appointment of Thornburgh, though publicly he did not criticize the choices. On January 3rd, David Buksbaum, a former CBS News executive and a close friend of Rather's, said, "I am part of this group that advised Dan on this and we said, 'You've got to say this is unfair. You need a third party in there that knows something about television.' " Buksbaum was unhappy that Thornburgh's Washington law firm, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham, was to conduct the inquiry. CBS News employees also pointed out that Sumner Redstone, the Viacom chairman and C.E.O., to whom Moonves reported, had endorsed Bush, saying, "a Republican administration is better for our company." It was a reminder that Viacom lobbies the government that CBS News covers.

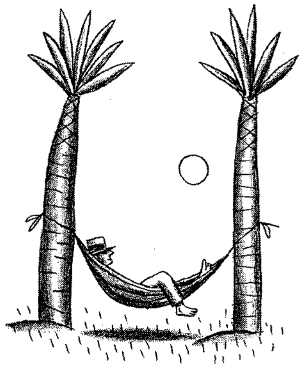
No one argued that Redstone, or Moonves, would edit news pieces, but in the end Heyward, with the concurrence of other news executives, decided to hold the Ed Bradley piece. In explaining CBS's reasons to Bradley and Gelber, Heyward and other news executives said that if CBS were to air it in the wake of the National Guard fiasco it would make it appear that CBS was determined to defeat Bush. Many at CBS News agreed, but with reluctance—and with anger, directed at Mapes and Rather. Heyward also told Bradley and Gelber that the segment needed more work. Bradley understood the first reason but not the second. "I respect his decision not to put it on," Bradley said of Heyward, though he also said, "I thought the piece was good to go." The piece was never aired.

From late September through the Christmas holidays, employees at CBS News wondered, Would Rather be fired? Would Heyward? Who else? What would be the long-term effect on CBS News's reputation? "When I got into this business, I really thought that what we did in the media was important. I think the public felt the same way," the "60 Minutes" correspondent Steve Kroft told me. "I'm not sure the public feels that way anymore. They've become more cynical, and there are reasons for that cynicism."

Rather says that he is "comfortable" with Moonves playing a larger part in news. "The baseline for me—I can be as dumb as a brick about a lot of things, but at least I'm smart enough to know what my job is here, my job is to cover news, get stories, and to get them on the air, and to not worry about what the corporate structure is, or how it works. And another baseline is that Moonves is a terrific leader. He's sharp, he's book smart, and he's done great things for CBS as a whole. Look at where we were when he came aboard." Moonves is more reserved about Rather, telling friends last fall that he suspected Rather would escape being fired because he was not the reporter he claimed to be on the September 8th broadcast but had appeared only to conduct scripted interviews. What Moonves was really hoping was that the report would spare Heyward. He said that he thought Heyward walked the "tightrope" between representing the news division and the corporation with great skill. Moonves also told friends he was convinced that he had to be more involved in the news division. For his part, Heyward knew that he might be a target of the panel report. "Obviously, this has been on my watch," he told me.

Rather worried that his reputation would be stained by the one broadcast. He worried that CBS News would become less aggressive. He worried about Thornburgh. He worried about Mapes, to whom he said he still felt loyal. He believed that the story was essentially correct—that Bush did benefit from political pull and failed to meet his obligations. He didn't know that Don Hewitt was among the first CBS employees interviewed by the panel. "The first question Thornburgh asked was 'Is CBS News intimidated by Dan Rather?' "

"Mr. Thornburgh, I couldn't have said it better," Hewitt said. He told me, "I didn't want to answer the question." But he did.



Rather also knew that he had lost leverage at CBS. His previous contracts guaranteed that he would occupy the anchor chair, but that guarantee ended in 2002. His contract expires at the end of 2006, and he had wanted to step down as anchor on March 9, 2006—his twenty-fifth anniversary.

Despite the critics, the announcement that Rather's last day would come a year sooner was also greeted with sadness. Lee Cowan, a Dallas-based correspondent who is thirty-nine and considers Rather a mentor, said, "We will lose panache. I'm very proud, even after the problems we've had, to call people on the phone and tell them, 'I'm Lee Cowan with CBS News with Dan Rather.' If he's not there, I wonder what our identity will be."

Moonves received a copy of the panel's report on December 29th while he was on his honeymoon in Mexico. (Moonves had married Julie Chen, "The Early Show" co-anchor, six days before.) "I read it three or four times in depth," he said. He was "impressed" with the panel's thoroughness, and "upset" that there seemed to be no system of checks and balances, that news executives neither insisted on knowing Mary Mapes's sources nor vetted the experts. "I do not know our stories before they air," Moonves told me. "The separation of church and state really existed. I think maybe to an extent that is no longer warranted, being that something like this could happen." While Moonves was reading the report, Rather was reporting on the tsunami.

It took Rather forty-three hours in the air to return home, and he arrived at his apartment at about midnight on Sunday, January 9th. The report was made public the next morning. Moonves issued a statement saying that he was terminating Mary Mapes immediately. He also asked for resignations from Betsy West, Josh Howard, and Howard's deputy producer, Mary Murphy. (West, Howard, and Murphy have not submitted their resignations, and have retained legal counsel; none have spoken publicly about the report.) Moonves, in his statement, said that the broadcast "would have benefitted from a more direct involvement on Rather's part," but that since Rather had "already apologized," and had "voluntarily" announced that he was stepping down as anchor, "we believe any further action would not be appropriate." He acknowledged that there were "questions about accountability at CBS News," but he declined to punish Heyward because, he said, Heyward had warned West and Howard to be careful "to defend 'every syllable' of the segment," but his "directives were not implemented."

The panel faulted Betsy West for not following up on Heyward's instructions, but did not look into why Heyward did not follow up on his own orders. Nor did the panel dwell on the fact that as early as September 10th Josh Howard, the producer, had expressed doubts about the documents and conveyed these doubts to Heyward. Moonves did not testify, but he told me on January 11th that he spoke with Heyward about the need to authenticate the sources and documents on September 9th or 10th—he's not certain of the exact date. "I'm not a journalist, but the first three questions I asked they were not able to answer—starting with the first one, Who is the source?" he said.

Early in the morning the day the report came out, Walter Cronkite was in his office at CBS headquarters. When Cronkite finished reading what he calls a "remarkable" document that "will be a standard study in journalism schools," he walked down the hall to Moonves's office and stuck his head in. "You did a terrific job for us today," he told Moonves. The loquacious Moonves, who started his career as an actor, was momentarily speechless. "I almost started to cry," Moonves said later. One thing he didn't say, Cronkite told me, was that he thought Moonves's statement should have been more critical of Rather and Heyward.

CBS's problems, the report said, "were caused primarily by a myopic zeal to be the first news organization to broadcast what was believed to be a new story." The panel faulted CBS for engaging in a "strident defense of the September 8 segment while failing to adequately probe whether any of the questions raised had merit." Mapes was a primary target—faulted for carelessness and overzealousness—but Rather was not spared. He delegated too much to Mapes, the panel report said, and then failed to acknowledge mistakes.

"I felt throughout, based on the panel's report, that the 'sin' Andrew did was he trusted his lieutenants, and his lieutenants trusted Mary Mapes," Moonves told me. "There clearly was a systemic problem." Many of Heyward's colleagues at CBS News, including many who like and admire him, wonder whether he would have survived had he been—like former news presidents such as Fred Friendly, Richard Salant, and Bill Leonard—less of a "savvy corporate citizen." Was the panel, some wondered, giving its client, Les Moonves, what he wanted?

The panel suggested that Mapes and others were driven to get a scoop, but it did not explore ratings pressures from the corporate parent. It looked at whether CBS News had a political bias, and though it "found certain actions that could support such charges," it wrote that it "cannot conclude that a political agenda" drove decisions. The panel reached no "definitive conclusion" about whether the documents were fake; the New York *Observer* last week reported that CBS News had hired a private investigator to pursue that question. And the panel was silent on a mystery: Who had the power to compel CBS to push aside normal checks and balances and to insist that the September broadcast was, as Rather had said, "right on the money"?

The day the report appeared, Mapes issued a statement: "I am terribly disappointed in the conclusions of the report." She also expressed shock at "the vitriolic scapegoating" that Moonves showed in terminating her. The next day, Rather sent an internal message to fellow CBS News employees saying that his "strongest reaction is one of sadness and concern" for the four colleagues who lost their jobs. "We should take seriously the admonition of the report's authors to do our job well and carefully," he said, and it's also important to pick up on the panel's "admonition" that the report should not chill CBS's efforts to cover controversial issues. One senior producer who likes Rather but finds him truly strange read the statement and called it "a self-parody," as if "he were our leader." Rather ended his message to the troops without apology or concession. He simply concluded, "Lest anyone have any doubt, I have read the report, I take it seriously, and I shall keep its lessons well in mind."

Three days after the report was released, Rather told me, "You can never check and recheck enough. It's an old lesson of journalism." We were in his office, with the lights dimmed, and he refused to speak ill of Mapes, saying of her and the others, "I know how loyal they've been to me." When I asked if this loyalty was misplaced, he said, "I'm not going to debate the specifics of the report. There was no chance to cross-examine people. This is where I stand: the panel has spoken. I read it. I absorbed it and have it very much in mind."

When I asked Rather what he had "in mind," he looked intent. "I'm not arguing with the panel—they are honorable people," he said. "But I worked with all of these people for a long while, and neither in my mind nor in my heart am I going to give them up." His eyes were wet, and he paused for a few seconds to compose himself. To friends, he has said he was heartened that the panel declared that it couldn't prove political bias or that the documents were fake. He was puzzled that these facts did not qualify as headlines.

At 3:56 P.M. on January 14th, Rather sat in the anchor chair and did "Newsbreak" for the CBS stations, giving them a preview of that night's "CBS Evening News." Rather had told Eric Wybenga, who often writes the script for his daily CBS radio commentary, that he wanted to comment on a front-page story on a C.I.A. report warning that turmoil in Iraq would produce more terrorists. He went upstairs to write it himself. He closed the door, sat at his laptop, and ten minutes later walked across the hall to read the comment, which took ninety seconds. Since the Bush Administration has, "from the beginning, depicted Iraq as a front line in the global war on terrorism, this finding has the potential to create embarrassment," Rather said, in his best anchorman voice. "However, looked at another way, the report can be seen as justifying the White House stand." He did a flawless reading in one take.

After chatting a bit more and putting on a red tie, at 5:20 P.M. Rather returned to the anchor chair, where except for another visit to makeup, he would be stationed until the newscast. He read from a teleprompter a series of promotional spots that he personalizes for various local stations—"Back to you, Wayne and Mary

Ellen"—before responding to a question from the local anchors, who draw authority from the "voice of God." He did these until it was almost six, and, for the first time that day, he reviewed his own script and "tells," along with the scripts of the correspondent pieces. He then rehearsed.

At six-twenty-five, Jim Murphy headed for the control room, where Rather's face filled the big screen built into his desk. Two smaller monitors, to his left and his right, contain the newscasts of NBC and ABC, without sound, so that when they all return to the fishbowl, soon after Rather signs off, Murphy can answer Rather's immediate question: "What's the first story they led with, the weather?" ABC led with a weather story, Murphy said, and NBC included a weather "tell" in Brian Williams's opening. Rather half smiled. "Did the others have anything we envied?" he asked.

Soon after he closed the broadcast, telling viewers, "And that's part of our world," Rather returned to his office. On this particular day, he wanted me to understand another thing about the panel's report: "I don't want to revisit this subject because I don't want to rekindle hard feelings, controversy. I have to leave it there or it will be impossible to move on." Did he feel as though he were living through a storm? I had asked earlier in the day. Yes, he said, adding, "But one thing about storms: they never last."

Rather says that he is looking forward to "60 Minutes," and that he feels welcome, although people there expressed concern to me that the report has damaged Rather and, in turn, might damage them. Rather also wants to be sure that he has a job on "60 Minutes" if the Wednesday program is cancelled.

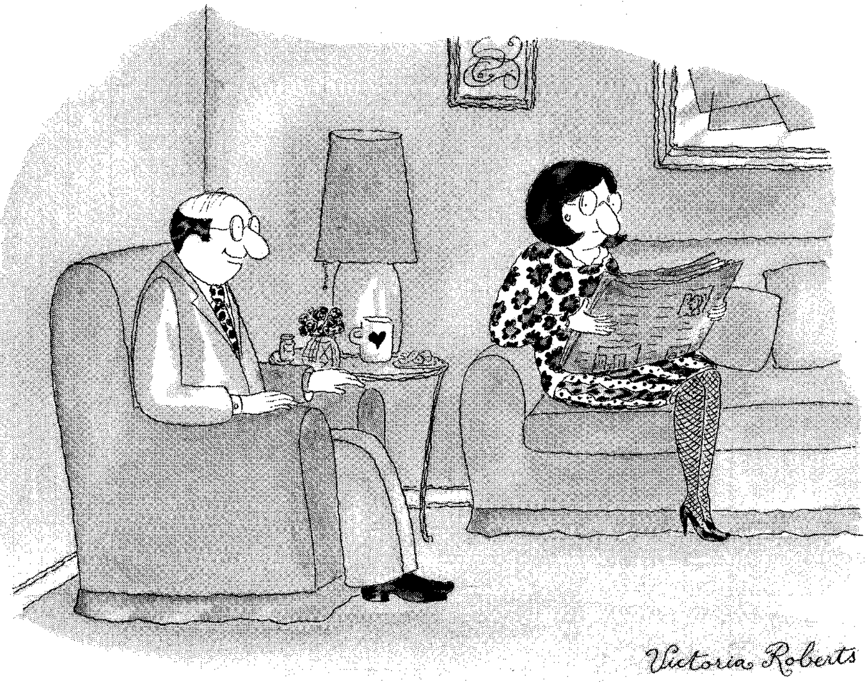
Friends worry about Rather's life after the "CBS Evening News." They know that he enjoys reading, and retreating to a cabin in Beaverkill, New York, where he fishes for trout, or to a house the Rathers have in Lakeway, Texas, where Jean spends summers, and where Dan tries to spend part of August. But they also know that work frames his life. Perry Smith, who retired several years ago after twenty-five years as a public-affairs manager for Exxon, told me about chatting with Rather last summer in Lakeway, and hearing that a small plane had just crashed nearby. Rather said, "Let's go!" They rushed off to survey the wreckage, and learned that there were six fatalities. "Dan got on his cell phone and called CBS radio in New York and got on the air," Smith said.

Rather is much less visible around town than either Brokaw or Jennings. He works late, and spends a lot of time with his family, including his son, Danjack, who is an assistant D.A. in Manhattan, and his daughter, Robin, who lives in Austin, and with his two grandchildren. When, on occasion, one spots Rather at a book party or any other sort of celebration, he often appears awkward, as if he were fulfilling an obligation. A moment later, he is gone.

Rather is preoccupied with his reputation, and said, of himself, "I hope it will be said: 'He never sold out. He didn't cease trying to be a pull-no-punches, play-no-favorites reporter in order to meet what some people see as the tenet of anchoring, which is "Work hard never to offend anybody, don't put your hands on anything that is hot." ' " He paused before adding that he had kept at it over a "long period of time." He called this his "peasant stubbornness."

His thoughts then drifted to his boyhood. "It does take something to stay, and stick it out," he said. "And it's easy when you're blowing out opponents. When you win every game fifty to thirteen, it's always a happy locker room. You get to kiss the cheerleaders, toast a beer with the guys, and just feel terrific. But it's rare in life when every season you blow out every opponent fifty to thirteen. I remember our high-school football coach, a great guy, Lamar Camp. Jean has warned me about using sports analogies, but I'll go ahead. He'd say, 'If the other team fumbles on their one-yard line and you're first and goal from a yard out, everybody wants the ball. But if you're on the road and the wind and the crowd' "—his voice broke—" 'are against you and you're down by four and you got to drive the length of the field with not much time, that's the test.' Sometimes that's what you have to do. Give me a quarterback who, when the ball is wet and the winds are in his face, on the road, the crowd's against him and it's fourth and goal with the game on the line—give me a quarterback who can get it in there. In some ways and some days, if you work in network news, you feel that way. If you're the anchorperson, you get the money, you get the glory when there is any, but you're the guy that's got to get it in there."

Then he started to quote "a great old Baptist hymn" that he called "What If This Is the Last Time." With tears trickling down his cheeks, he continued, "Not just now, when it might seem more appropriate, but almost the entire length and breadth of my time at CBS, I'd think, What if this is the last time?" ♦



"I've finally learned to live with myself—you're next."

FICTION

THE GORGE

BY UMBERTO ECO

My memory is proglottidean, like the tapeworm, but unlike the tapeworm it has no head, it wanders in a maze, and any point may be the beginning or the end of its journey. I must wait for the memories to come of their own accord, following their own logic. That is how it is in the fog. In the sunlight, you see things from a distance and you can change directions purposefully in order to meet up with something particular. In the fog, something or someone approaches you, but you do not know what or who until it is near.

But when I think of my life at the Oratorio I can see it all, like a film. No longer proglottidean but, rather, a logical sequence . . .

Life changed when I was eleven years old, with my evacuation, in 1943, to Solara. In the city, I had been a melancholy boy who played with his schoolmates for a few hours a day. The rest of the time, I was curled up with a book. In Solara, where I could walk to the town school by myself and romp through the fields and vineyards, I was free, and uncharted territory opened up before me. And I had many friends to roam with.

When the Allies were bombing the city, we could see the distant flashes from our windows in Solara, hear the rumbling of something like thunder. The war had made us fatalists, a bombing was like a storm. We kids kept playing calmly through Tuesday evening, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. But were we really calm? Were we not beginning to be marked by anxiety, by the stunned and relieved melancholy that grips anyone who passes alive through a field strewn with corpses?

At the Oratorio, where we spent our afternoons after school, we were basically free, rounded up only at six, for catechism and benediction; otherwise we did as we pleased. There was a rudimentary merry-go-round, a few swings, and a small theatre, where I trod the boards for the first time, in "The Little Parisian Girl." Older boys also came to the Oratorio, and even young men—ancient to us—who played Ping-Pong or cards, though not for money. That good man Don Cognasso, the Oratorio's director, required of them no profession of faith; it was enough that they came there instead of caravanning toward the city on bicycles, even at the risk of being caught in a bombardment, to attempt the climb up to the Casa Rossa, the bordello famous throughout the province.

HERBERT LIST, "ROMA, TRASTEVERE" (1953)/MAGNUM

It was at the Oratorio, after September 8th of 1943, that I first heard about the partisans. For a while, they were just boys who were trying to avoid either the Repubblica Sociale's new draft or the Nazi roundups, which meant being sent off to work in Germany. Later, people began to call them rebels, because that was what they were called in official communiqués. Only when we found out that ten of them had been executed—including one from Solara—and when we heard via Radio London that special messages were being directed to them, did we begin to call them partisans, or patriots, as they preferred. In Solara, people rooted for the partisans, because the boys had all grown up in those parts, and when they came around, although they all now went by nicknames—Hedgehog, Ferruccio, Lightning, Bluebeard—people still used the names they had known them by before. Many were youths I had seen at the Oratorio, playing hands of *scopa* in flimsy, threadbare jackets, and now they reappeared wearing brimmed berets, cartridge belts over their shoulders, submachine guns, belts with two grenades attached, or even holstered pistols. They wore red shirts, or jackets from the English Army, or the pants and leggings of the King's officers. They were beautiful.

By 1944, the partisans were appearing in Solara, making quick incursions when the Fascist Black Brigades were elsewhere. Even among the partisans, there were divisions. On occasion, the Badogliani came down, with their blue neckerchiefs; people said that they backed the monarchy and still charged into battle shouting "Savoy!" Other times, it was the Garibaldini, with their red neckerchiefs, singing songs against the King and his right-hand man, Badoglio. The Badogliani were better armed; it was said that the English sent aid to them but not to the other partisans, who were all Communists. The Garibaldini had submachine guns, like the Black Brigades', captured in occasional clashes or in some surprise attack on an armory, and the Badogliani had the latest-model English Sten guns. One of the Badogliani once let me fire a round. Most of the time they fired to keep in practice, or to impress girls.

Gragnola. He frequented the Oratorio. He insisted that his name was pronounced Gràgnola, but everyone called him Gragnòla, a word that brought to mind a hail of gunfire. He replied that he was a peaceful man, and his friends answered back, "Come off it, we know . . ." It was whispered that he had connections to the Garibaldini brigades up in the mountains—he was even a great leader, someone said, and risked more by living in town than he would by hiding out, because if his activities were ever discovered he would be shot at the drop of a hat.

Gragnola acted with me in "The Little Parisian Girl," and after that he took a liking to me. He taught me how to play *tressette*. He seemed to feel uncomfortable with the other adults at the Oratorio, and he spent long hours chatting with me. Perhaps he knew he was saying things so outrageous that if the others heard him they would take him for the Antichrist, and so he could only trust a kid.

He showed me the clandestine broadsheets that were circulating. He would never let me take them because, he said, anyone caught with one would be shot. That was how I learned of the Ardeatine massacre, in Rome. "Our comrades stay up in the hills," Gragnola used to tell me, "so these things won't happen anymore. Those Germans, they should all be *kaputt!*"

Gragnola had been a teacher, I did not know of what, in trade schools, going to work every morning on his bicycle and returning home in midafternoon. Then he had to stop: some said because he was devoting himself heart and soul to the partisans; others murmured that it was because he was consumptive. Indeed, Gragnola had the look of a consumptive, an ashen face with two sickly pink cheekbones, hollow cheeks, a persistent cough. He had bad teeth, he limped, he was slightly hunchbacked, with shoulder blades that jutted out, and his jacket collar stood apart from his neck, so that his clothes seemed to hang on him like sacks. Onstage, he always had to play the bad guy or the lame caretaker of a mysterious villa.

He was, everyone said, a well of scientific knowledge and had often been invited to teach at the university, but he had refused out of fondness for his students. "Horseshit," he later told me. "Yambo, I only taught in the poor kids' school, and only as a substitute, because with this foul war I never even graduated from college. When I was twenty, they sent me off to break the back of Greece, I was wounded in the knee, and never mind that because you can barely tell, but somewhere in that mud I came down with a nasty sickness and I've been spitting up blood ever since. If I ever got my hands on Fat Head"—this was his name for Mussolini—"I wouldn't kill him because unfortunately I'm a coward, but I would kick his ass until it was out of commission for what little time I hope he has left to live, the Judas."

I once asked him why he came to the Oratorio, since everyone said he was an atheist. He told me that it was the only place he could see people. And, besides, he was not an atheist but an anarchist. At that time I did not know what anarchists were, and he explained that they were people who wanted freedom, with no masters, no kings, no state, and no priests. "Above all, no state, not like those Communists in Russia, where the state even tells them when they have to use the crapper."

I asked him why he associated with the Garibaldini, who were Communists, if he was against the Communists. He replied that, No. 1, not all of the Garibaldini were Communists, there were socialists and even anarchists among them, and, No. 2, the enemies at the moment were the Nazi-Fascists, and it was no time for splitting hairs. "First we'll win together; we'll settle our differences later."

Then he added that he came to the Oratorio because it was a good place. Priests were like the Garibaldini—they were an evil breed, but there were some respectable men among them. "Especially in these times, when who knows what's going to happen to these kids, who until last year were being taught that books and muskets make perfect Fascists. At the Oratorio, at least, they don't let them go to the dogs, and they teach them to be decent, even if they do make too much fuss about jerking off, but that doesn't matter because you all do it anyway, and at most you confess it later. So I come to the Oratorio and I help Don Cognasso to get the kids to play. When we go to Mass, I sit quietly in the back of the church, because Jesus Christ I respect even if I don't respect God."

Gragnola and I talked about everything. I would tell him about the books I was reading, and he would discuss them passionately. "Verne," he would say, "is better than Salgari, because he's scientific. Cyrus Smith manufacturing nitroglycerin is more real than that Sandokan tearing his chest with his fingernails just because he's fallen for some bitchy little fifteen-year-old."

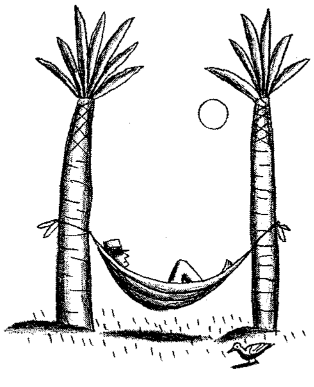
Gragnola taught me about Socrates and Giordano Bruno. And Bakunin, about whose work and life I had known very little. He told me about Campanella, Sarpi, and Galileo, who were all imprisoned or tortured by priests for trying to spread scientific principles, and about some who had cut their own throats, like Ardigò, because the bosses and the Vatican were keeping them down. Since I had read the Hegel entry ("Emin. Ger. phil. of the pantheist school") in the Nuovissimo Melzi, I asked Gragnola about him. "Hegel wasn't a pantheist, and your Melzi is an ignoramus. Giordano Bruno might have been a pantheist. A pantheist believes that God is everywhere, even in that speck of a fly you see there. You can imagine how satisfying that is—being everywhere is like being nowhere. Well, for Hegel it wasn't God but the State that had to be everywhere; therefore, he was a Fascist."

"But didn't he live more than a hundred years ago?"

"So? Joan of Arc, also a Fascist of the highest order. Fascists have always existed. Since the age of . . . since the age of God. Take God—a Fascist."

"But aren't you one of those atheists who say that God doesn't exist?"

"Who said that? Don Cognasso, who can't even grasp the most trifling thing?



I believe that God does, unfortunately, exist. It's just that he's a Fascist."

"But why is God a Fascist?"

"Listen, you're too young for me to give you a theology lecture. We'll start with what you know. Recite the Ten Commandments for me, seeing as the Oratorio makes you memorize them."

I recited them. "Good," he said. "Now pay attention. Among those Ten Commandments are four, think about it, only four, that promote good things—and even those, well, let's review them. Don't kill, don't steal, don't bear false witness, and don't covet your neighbor's wife. This last one is a commandment for men who know what honor is: on the one hand, don't cuckold your friends, and, on the other, try to preserve your family, and I can live with that; anarchy wants to get rid of families, too, but you can't have everything all at once. As for the other three, I agree, but common sense should tell you that much at a bare minimum. And even then you have to weigh them; we all tell lies sometimes, perhaps even for good ends, whereas killing, no, you shouldn't do that, ever."

"Not even if the King sends you off to war?"

"There's the rub. Priests will tell you that if the King sends you off to war you can—indeed, you should—kill. And that the responsibility lies with the King. That's how they justify war, which is a nasty brute, especially if Fat Head is the one who sends you off. But notice that the commandments don't say that it's O.K. to kill in war. They say don't kill, period. And then . . ."

"Then?"

"Let's look at the other commandments. The first commandment says you shall have no other God before him. That's how the Lord prevents you from thinking, for instance, about Allah, or Buddha, or maybe even Venus—and, let's be honest, it wouldn't have been bad at all to have a piece of tail like that as your goddess. But it also means that you shouldn't believe in philosophy, for instance, or in science, or get any ideas about man descending from apes. Just Him, that's it. Now pay attention, because the other commandments are all Fascist, designed to force you to accept society as it is. Remember the one about keeping the Sabbath day holy? What do you think of it?"

"So, what's with the paper dress?"

"Well, basically it says to go to Mass on Sunday—what's wrong with that?"

"That's what Don Cognasso tells you, and, like all priests, he doesn't know the first thing about the Bible. Wake up! In a primitive tribe like the one Moses took for a walk, this meant that you had to observe the rites, and the purpose of the rites—from human sacrifices on up to Fat Head's rallies in Piazza Venezia—is to addle people's brains! And then? Honor thy father and mother. Honor thy father and mother means respect the ideas of your elders, don't oppose tradition, don't presume to change the tribe's way of life. See? Don't cut off the King's head, although, God knows, if we have a head on our own shoulders we should, especially with a king like that dwarf Savoy, who betrayed his army and sent his officers to their death. And now you can see that even 'Don't steal' isn't quite as innocent a commandment as it seems, because it orders you not to touch private property, which belongs to the person who got rich by stealing from you. If only it ended there. There are three commandments left. 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' The Don Cognassos of the world would have you believe that this commandment means 'Don't commit impure acts,' and its only purpose is to keep you from wagging that thing that hangs between your legs, but to drag in the stone tablets for the occasional wank seems a bit much. What's a guy like me supposed to do, a failure? That beautiful woman, my mother, didn't make me beautiful, and I'm a gimp to boot, and I've never touched a woman who's a woman, and they want to deny me even that release?

"God could have said, for instance, 'You can screw, but only to make babies,' especially since at that time there weren't enough people in the world. But the Ten Commandments don't say that. So, on the one hand, you can't covet your friend's wife and, on the other, you can't commit impure acts. When is screwing allowed? I mean, really, you're trying to make a law that works for the whole world—when the Romans, who weren't God, made laws it was stuff that still makes sense today—and God tosses down a Decalogue that doesn't tell you the most important things?

"And now we come to the last commandment: 'Don't covet other people's stuff.' But have you ever asked yourself why this commandment exists, when you've already got 'Don't steal'? If you covet a bike like the one your friend has, is that a sin? No, not if you don't steal it from him. Don Cognasso will tell you that this commandment prohibits envy, which is certainly an ugly thing. But there's bad envy, which is when your friend has a bicycle and you don't, and you hope he breaks his neck going down a hill, and there's good envy, which is when you want a bike like his and work your butt off to be able to buy one, even a used one, and it's good envy that makes the world go round. And then there's another envy, which is justice envy, which is when you can't see any reason that a few people have everything and others are dying of hunger. And if you feel this fine sort of envy, which is socialist envy, you get busy trying to make a world in which riches are better distributed. But that's exactly what the commandment prohibits you from doing. The tenth commandment prohibits revolution. Therefore, my dear boy, don't kill and don't steal from poor kids like yourself, but go ahead and covet what other people have taken from you. That's the sun of the coming day, and that's why our comrades are staying up there in the mountains, to get rid of Fat Head, who rose to power funded by agrarian landowners and by Hitler's toadies, Hitler who wanted to conquer the world so that that guy Krupp who builds Berthas this long could sell more cannons. But you, how could you ever understand about these things, you who grew up memorizing oaths of obedience to Il Duce's orders?"

"No, I understand, even if not everything."

"I sure hope so."

I noticed that Gragnola always wore a long, thin leather sack that hung from his neck, beneath his shirt.

"What's that, Gragnola?"

"A lancet."

"Were you studying to be a doctor?"

"I was studying philosophy. I was given the lancet in Greece by a doctor in my regiment, before he died. 'I don't need this anymore,' he told me. 'That grenade has opened my belly. What I need now is one of those kits, like women have, with a needle and thread. But this hole is past stitching up. Keep the lancet to remember me by.' And I've worn it ever since."

"Why?"

"Because I'm a coward. With the things I do and the things I know, if the S.S. or the Black Brigades catch me, they'll torture me. If they torture me, I'll talk, because evil scares me. And I'll be sending my comrades to their death. This way, if they catch me, I'll cut my throat with the lancet. It doesn't hurt, only takes a second—*sffft*. I'll be screwing them all: the Fascists because they won't learn a thing, the priests because I'll be a suicide and that's a sin, and God because I'll be dying when I choose and not when he chooses. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

Gragnola's speeches left me sad. Not because I was sure they were evil but because I feared they were good. He lived in a world made sad by an evil God, and the only times I saw him smile with any tenderness were when he was talking to me about Socrates or Jesus. Both of whom, I would remind myself, were killed, so I did not see what there was to smile about.

And yet he was not mean; he loved the people around him. He had it in only for God, and that must have been a real chore, because it was like throwing rocks at a rhinoceros—the rhinoceros never notices a thing and continues going about its rhino business, and meanwhile you are red with rage and ripe for a heart attack.

When was it that my friends and I began the Great Game? In a world where everyone was shooting at everyone else, we needed an enemy. And we chose the kids up in San Martino, a village on the peak above us.

The people of San Martino made ideal enemies, since in our minds they were all Fascists. In reality, that was not the case; it was just that two brothers from San Martino had joined the Black Brigades, while their two younger brothers had remained in the village and were the ringleaders of the bunch up there. But, still, the town was attached to its sons who had gone off to war, and in Solara it was whispered that the people of San Martino were not to be trusted.

Fascists or not, we used to say that the boys of San Martino were no better than animals. The fact is that if you live in such an accursed place you have to get up to some mischief every day, just to feel alive. They had to come down to Solara for school, and we who lived in town used to look at them as if they were Gypsies. Many of us would bring a snack to school, bread and marmalade, and they were lucky if they had been given a wormy apple. In short, they had to do something, and on several occasions they bombarded us with rocks as we approached the gate of the Oratorio. We had to make them pay. So we decided to go up to San Martino and attack them while they played ball in the church piazza.

But the only way to San Martino was by the road that went straight up, with no bends, and from the church piazza you could see if someone was coming. Thus we thought that we would never be able to take them by surprise. Until Durante, a farmer's kid with a head as big and dark as an Abyssinian's, said yes, we could, if we climbed the gorge.

At the time, no one climbed up the gorge—and forget about coming down—because you would lose your footing at every step. Where there were no brambles, the earth fell away beneath you; you might see a thicket of acacia or blackberry with an opening right in the middle and think you had found a path, but it would be just a random patch of stony ground, and after ten steps you would start to slip, then fall to one side and tumble at least twenty metres. Even if you survived the fall without breaking any bones, the thorns would scratch your eyes out. On top of that, it was said to be thick with vipers.

Climbing up would clearly require training. It took us a season: we started with ten metres the first day, memorizing each step and each crevice, trying to place our feet in the same places on the way down as we had on the way up, and the next day we worked on the next ten metres. We could not be seen from San Martino, so we had all the time we wanted. It was important not to improvise; we had to become like the animals that made their homes on the slopes of the gorge—the grass snakes, the lizards.

Two of my friends got sprains, and one almost killed himself and skinned the palm of his hand trying to stop his fall, but in the end we were the only people in the world who knew how to climb the gorge. One afternoon, we risked it: we climbed for an hour or more and arrived out of breath, emerging from a dense thicket at the very base of San Martino, where between the houses and the precipice there was a walkway, with a wall along it to prevent the locals from falling over the precipice in the dark. Our path reached the wall at the very point where a gap opened, a breach wide enough for us to slip through. Beyond that was a lane that went past the door to the rectory, then opened right onto the church piazza.

When we burst onto the piazza, the

SAGUAROS

They look battered and friction-worn, although
they never go
anywhere, but stand for a century or two
as if playing statue
out in the humorless sun
and the cold-faced moon. Their fun
is sombre fun, clumsy fun, without a word.
The hummingbird
and the cactus wren
inhabit their thorny mockery of men,
each miming gesture
slightly unprecedented in Nature.
Their melancholy individuality
spells death to me;
their skeletons outlast their flesh, as with us,
and as in many a howling congregation
their arms lift up in surrender or supplication.
Mute mobs of them throng the desert dusk.

—*John Updike*

San Martino boys were in the middle of a game of blindman's bluff. A masterstroke: one of them could not see at all and the others were jumping here and there in their efforts to avoid him. We launched our munitions, hitting one boy directly on the forehead, and the others fled into the church, seeking aid from the priest. That sufficed for the moment, and back down the lane we ran, through the gap, and down the gorge. The priest arrived in time to see our heads disappearing into the shrubs, and he hurled some terrible threats at us, and Durante shouted "Hah!" and clapped his left hand against his right biceps.

But now the San Martino boys got wise. Seeing that we had come up the gorge, they placed sentinels at the breach in the wall. It is true that we could get almost right up to the wall before they were aware of us, but only almost: the last few metres were in the open, through blackthorn scrub that slowed our progress, giving the sentinel enough time to raise the alarm. They were ready at the end of the lane with sun-baked balls of mud, and they launched them at us before we could gain the walkway.

It seemed a shame to have worked so hard learning to climb the gorge only to have to give it all up. Until Durante said, "We'll learn to climb in the fog."

Since it was early autumn, there was as much fog in those parts as a person could want. On foggy days, the town of Solara disappeared, and the only thing that rose above all that gray was the San Martino bell tower. Being up in that tower was like being in a dirigible above the clouds.

Climbing the gorge in the fog was much harder than climbing it in sunlight. You really had to learn every step by heart, be able to say such-and-such a rock is here, watch out for the edge of a dense thorn thicket there, five steps (five, not four or six) farther to the right the ground drops away suddenly, when you reach the boulder there will be a false path just to your left and if you follow it you will fall off a cliff. And so on.

We made exploratory trips on clear days, then for a week we practiced by repeating the steps in our heads. I tried to make a map, as in an adventure book, but half my friends could not read maps. Too bad for them, I had it printed in my brain and could have traversed the gorge with my eyes closed—and going on a foggy night was essentially the same thing.

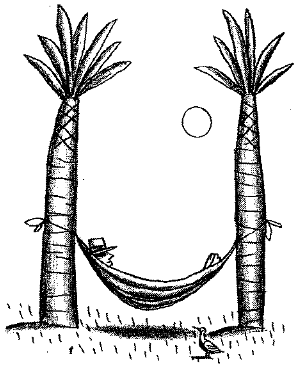
After many test runs, we attempted our first expedition. Who knows how we made it to the top, but we did, and there they were, in the piazza, which was still free of fog, shooting the breeze—because in a place like San Martino either you hang out in the piazza or you go to bed after eating your soup of stale bread and milk.

We entered the piazza, gave them a proper pelting, jeered them as they fled to their houses, and then climbed back down, victorious and exultant.

After that we risked other raids, and they were unable to post sentinels even when it was just dark, because most of them were afraid of the dark, on account of hellcats. We who attended the Oratorio could not have cared less about hellcats, because we knew that half a Hail Mary would basically paralyze them. We kept that up for several months. Then we got bored: the climb was no longer a challenge, in any weather.

It was noon on a Sunday. Something was happening, everyone already knew: two German trucks carrying soldiers had arrived in Solara; the men had searched half the town, and then taken the road up toward San Martino.

A thick fog had settled in early that morning, and even the voices of sparrows in the tree branches came to us as if through cotton wool. There was supposed to be a funeral, but the people in the procession would not venture onto the cemetery road, and the gravedigger sent word that he would not be burying anyone that day, lest someone make a mistake while lowering the coffin and cause the gravedigger to fall into the grave himself.



Two men from town had followed the Germans to find out what they were up to, and had seen them make their way slowly—headlights on but penetrating less than a metre—as far as the start of the ascent toward San Martino, and then stop, not daring to go on. Certainly not with their trucks, because they had no idea what was on either side of that steep incline, and they didn't want to roll off a precipice—maybe they even expected treacherous curves. Nor did they dare to attempt it on foot, not knowing what was where. Someone, however, had explained to them that the only way up to San Martino was by that road, and in that weather no one could possibly get down any other way, because of the gorge. So then they placed trestles at the end of the road and waited there, headlights on and guns levelled, so that no one could pass, while one of them yelled into a field telephone, perhaps asking for reinforcements. Our informers said that they heard him repeat "*volsunde, volsunde*" a number of times. Gragnola explained at once that they were certainly asking for *Wolfshunde;* that is, German shepherds.

The Germans waited there, and around four in the afternoon, with everything still a thick gray but also still light, they caught sight of someone coming down, on a bicycle. It was the parish priest of San Martino, who had been taking that road for who knows how many years and could even come down using his feet as brakes. Seeing a priest, the Germans held their fire, because, as we later learned, they were looking not for cassocks but for Cossacks. The priest explained, more with gestures than with words, that a man was dying on a farm near Solara and had called for extreme unction (he showed them the necessaries in a bag attached to the handlebars), and the Germans believed him. They let him pass, and the priest came to the Oratorio to whisper with Don Cognasso.

Don Cognasso was not the sort to get involved in politics, but he knew what was what and, in just a few words, told the priest to tell Gragnola and his friends what there was to tell, because he himself would not and could not get mixed up in such matters.

A group of young men quickly gathered around the card table, and I slipped in behind the last few, crouching a little to avoid notice.

According to the priest, there was a small detachment of Cossacks with the German troops. They had been taken prisoner on the Russian front, but for reasons of their own the Cossacks had it in for Stalin, and many of them had been persuaded (motivated by money, by hatred of the Soviets, by a desire not to rot in a prison camp, or even by the chance to leave their Soviet paradise, taking horses, carts, and family with them) to enlist as auxiliaries. Most were fighting in eastern areas, like Carnia, where they were much feared for their toughness and ferocity. But there was also a Turkic division in the Pavia region—people called them Mongols. Former Russian prisoners, if not actually Cossacks, were roaming around in Piedmont, too, with the partisans.

Everyone by now knew how the war was going to end, and, besides, the eight Cossacks in question were men with religious principles. After having seen two or three towns burned and poor people hanged by the dozen, and after two of their own number had been executed for refusing to shoot at old people and children, they had decided that they could no longer remain with the S.S. "Not only that," Gragnola explained, "but if the Germans lose the war, and by now they've lost, what will the Americans and the English do? They'll capture the Cossacks and give them back to the Russians, their allies. In Russia, these guys are *kaputt*. They're now trying to join the Allies, so that after the war they'll be given refuge somewhere, beyond the clutches of that Fascist Stalin."

"Indeed," the priest said, "these eight have heard about the partisans, who are fighting with the English and the Americans, and they're trying to reach them. They have their own ideas and are well informed: they don't want to join the Garibaldini; they want to be Badogliani."

They had deserted who knows where, then headed toward Solara simply because someone had told them that the Badogliani were in the area. They had walked many kilometres, off the roads, moving only at night and so taking twice as long to get anywhere, but the S.S. had stayed on their heels, and it was a miracle that they had managed to reach us, begging food at the occasional farmhouse, communicating as best they could (although they all spoke a smattering of German, only one knew Italian), and always on the verge of running into people who might be spies.

The day before, realizing that the S.S. was about to catch up with them, they had gone up to San Martino, thinking that from there they could fight off a battalion for a few days, and, after all, they might as well die bravely. Also, someone had told them that a certain Talino lived up there, and he knew someone who might be able to help them. At this point, they were a desperate bunch. They reached San Martino after dark and found Talino, who, however, told them that a Fascist family lived there and that, in a village that small, secrets didn't last long. The only thing he could think of was to have them seek refuge in the rectory. The priest took them in, not for political reasons, or even out of the goodness of his heart, but because he saw that letting them wander about would be worse than hiding them. But he couldn't keep them long. He didn't have enough food for eight men, and he was scared witless, because if the Germans came they would waste no time in searching every house, including the rectory.

"Boys, try to understand," the priest said. "You've all read Kesselring's manifesto—they've put it up everywhere. If they find those men in any of our houses, they'll burn the town, and, even worse, if one of them shoots at the Germans they'll kill us all."

Unfortunately, we had indeed seen Field Marshal Kesselring's manifesto, and even without it we knew that the S.S. were not exactly subtle, and that they had already burned several towns.

"And so?" Gragnola asked.

"So, seeing that this fog has by the grace of God descended upon us, and seeing that the Germans don't know the area, someone from Solara has to come up and get those blessed Cossacks, lead them back down, and take them to the Badogliani."

"And why someone from Solara?"

"*In primis*, because, to be frank, if I speak about this with anyone in San Martino, word will begin to get around, and in these times the fewer words getting around the better. *In secundis*, because the Germans have closed the road and no one can get out by that route. Hence the only thing left is to go through the gorge."

Hearing mention of the gorge, the men all said, "What, do we look crazy? In fog like this? How come that Talino fellow can't do it?," and things of that kind. But the damn priest, after reminding them that Talino was eighty and couldn't come down from San Martino even on the sunniest of days, added—and I say it was in revenge for the frights we boys from the Oratorio had given him—"The only people who know how to get through the gorge, even in fog, are your boys. Seeing as they learned that deviltry in order to make trouble, let them for once use their talents for the good. Bring the Cossacks down with the help of one of your boys."

"Christ," Gragnola said, "even if that's true, what would we do once we got them down—keep them in Solara so that on Monday morning they could be found among us instead of among you, and the Germans could burn our town instead?"

In the group were Stivulu and Gigio, two men who had connections to the Resistance. "Calm down," said Stivulu, the sharper of the two. "The Badogliani are, as we speak, in Orbegno, and neither the S.S. nor the Black Brigades have ever laid a hand on them there, because they stick to the high ground and control the entire valley with those English machine guns, which are astounding. From here to Orbegno, even in this fog, for somebody like Gigio, who knows the road, if he could use Bercelli's truck, which has got headlights made specially for fog, that's a two-hour trip. Let's go ahead and say three, because it's already getting dark. It's five now, Gigio gets there by eight, he warns them, they come down a little way and wait by the Vignoletta crossroads. Then the truck's back here by ten, let's go ahead and say eleven, and it hides in that cluster of trees at the foot of the gorge, near the little chapel of the Madonna. One of us, after eleven, goes up the gorge, gets the Cossacks from the rectory, brings them down, loads them into the truck, and before morning those fellows are with the Badogliani."

"And we're going through all this rigmarole, risking our necks, for eight

Mamelukes or Kalmyks or Mongols or whatever, who were with the S.S. up until yesterday?" asked a man with red hair, whose name, I think, was Migliavacca.

"Hey, buddy, these guys have changed their minds," Gragnola said, "and that's already a fine thing, but they're also eight strong men who know how to shoot, so they're useful. The rest is horseshit."

"They're useful for the Badogliani," Migliavacca snapped.

"Badogliani or Garibaldini, they're all fighting for freedom, and, as everybody's always saying, the accounts will be settled later, not sooner. We've got to save the Cossacks."

"You're right, too. And, after all, they're Soviet citizens, so they belong to the great fatherland of socialism," said a man named Martinengo, who had not quite kept up with all the turning of coats. But these were months when people were doing all sorts of things. Take Gino, who had been in the Black Brigades, and one of the more fanatical members, and then ran off to join the partisans and returned to Solara wearing a red neckerchief. But he was impulsive, and came back when he should have stayed away, to meet a girl, and the Black Brigades caught him and executed him in Asti at dawn one day.

"In short, it can be done," Gragnola said.

"There's just one problem," Migliavacca said. "Even the priest said that only the kids know how to climb the gorge, and I wouldn't involve a kid in such a delicate situation. Questions of judgment aside, a kid's likely to go around blabbing about it."

"No," Stivulu said. "For example, take Yambo here—none of you even noticed him, but he's heard everything. Yambo knows the gorge like the back of his hand, and he's got a good head on his shoulders, and, what's more, he's not the type to talk. I'd stake my life on it, and, besides, everyone in his family is on our side, so we're not running any risks."

I broke out in a cold sweat and started to say that it was late and I was expected at home.

Gragnola pulled me aside and rattled off a slew of fine words. That it was for freedom; that it was to save eight poor wretches; that even boys my age could be heroes; that, after all, I'd climbed the gorge many times and this time wouldn't be any different from the others, except there would be eight Cossacks coming down behind me and I would have to be careful not to lose them; that, in any case, the Germans were way over there, waiting at the end of the road like dumb-asses with no idea where the gorge was; that he would come with me even though he was sick, because you cannot turn your back when duty calls; that we would go not at eleven but, rather, at midnight, when everyone in my house was already asleep and I could slip out unnoticed, and the next day they would see me back in my bed as if nothing had happened. And so on, hypnotizing me.

Finally I said yes. After all, it was an adventure I would later be able to tell stories about, a partisan thing, a coup unlike any of Flash Gordon's in the forests of Arboria. Unlike any of Tremal-Naik's in the Black Jungle. Better than Tom Sawyer in the mysterious cave.

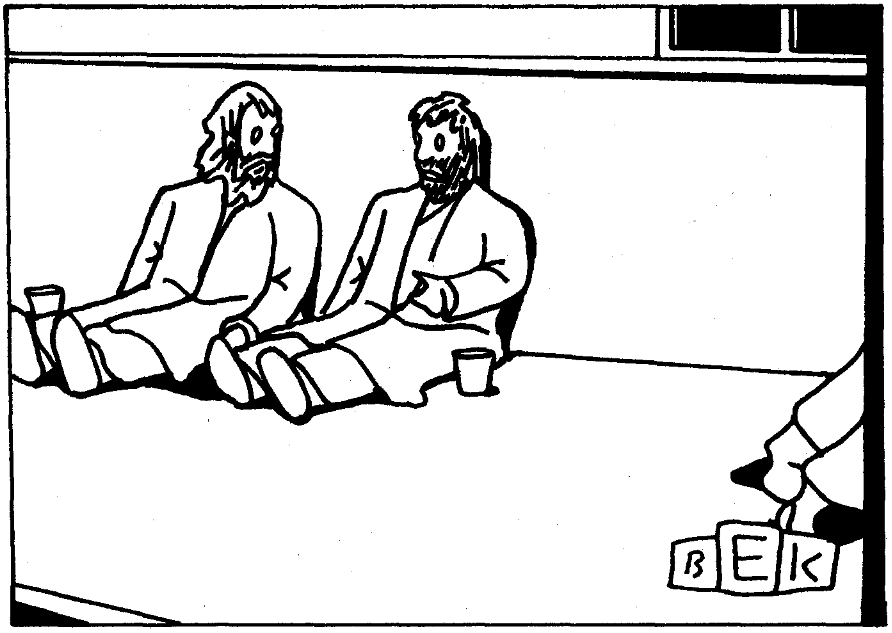
But, since I had a good head on my shoulders, I immediately set a few things straight with Gragnola. He was saying that, with eight Cossacks in tow, we risked losing them on the way down, and so we should get a nice long rope to tie everyone together, as mountain climbers do, and that way each could follow the next even without seeing where he was going. I said no, if we were roped together like that and the first man fell, he would pull everyone else down with him. What we needed were ten pieces of rope: each of us would hold tight to the end of the rope of the person in front of us and to the end of the rope of the person behind us, and if we felt one of them falling we would immediately let go of our end, because it was better that one should fall than all of us. "You're sharp," Gragnola said.

I asked him excitedly if he was going to come armed, and he said no—in the first place, because he would never hurt a fly, but also because if there were, God forbid, an engagement, the Cossacks were armed, and, finally, in the event that he was unlucky enough to get caught, they might not put him up against the wall right away if he was unarmed.

We went and told the priest that we were in agreement, and to have the Cossacks ready by one in the morning.

I went home for dinner around seven. The rendezvous was for midnight by the little chapel of the Madonna, and it would take me forty-five minutes of brisk walking to get there. "Do you have a watch?" Gragnola asked. "No," I told him, "but at eleven, when everyone goes to bed, I'll wait in the dining room where there's a clock."

Dinner at home with my mind aflame, after dinner a show of listening to the



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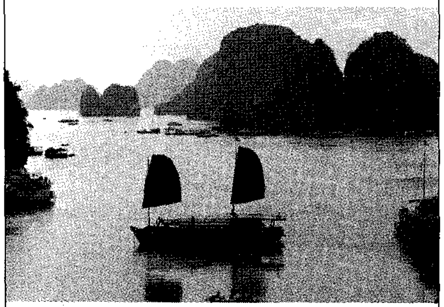

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radio and looking at my stamps. At eleven, the house was immersed in silence, and I was in the dining room, in the dark. Every now and then, I lighted a match to check the clock. At eleven-fifteen, I slipped out, and set off through the fog toward the little chapel of the Madonna.

Gragnola was there, and complained that I was late. I realized he was trembling. Not I. I was now in my element. He handed me the end of a rope, and we began climbing up the gorge.

I had the map in my head, but Gragnola kept saying, "Oh, God, I'm falling." I moved my feet as if following the score of a piece of music; that must be how pianists do it—with their hands, I mean, not their feet—and I did not miss a step. But he, even though he was following me, kept stumbling. And coughing. I often had to turn around and pull him by the hand. The fog was thick, but from half a metre away we could see each other. If I pulled the rope, Gragnola would emerge from dense vapors, which seemed to dissipate all at once, and appear suddenly before me, like Lazarus throwing off his shroud.

The climb lasted a good hour, but that was about average. The only time I warned Gragnola to be careful was when we reached the boulder. If, instead of going around it and rejoining the path, you mistakenly went to the left, feeling pebbles beneath your feet, you would end up in the ravine.

We reached the top, at the gap in the wall, and San Martino was a single invisible mass. We go straight, I told him, down the lane. Count at least twenty steps and we'll be at the rectory door.

We knocked at the door as we had agreed: three knocks, a pause, then three more. The priest came to let us in. He was a dusty pale color, like the clematis along the roads in summer. The eight Cossacks were there, armed like bandits and scared as children. Gragnola talked with the one who knew Italian. He spoke it quite well, though with a bizarre accent, but Gragnola, as people do with foreigners, spoke to him in infinitives.

"You to go ahead of friends and to follow me and child. You to say to your men what I say, and they to do what I say. Understand?"

"I understand, I understand. We're ready."

The priest, who was about to piss himself, opened the door and let us out into the lane. And at that very moment we heard, from the end of the village where the road came in, several Teutonic voices and the yelp of a dog.

"God damn it all to hell," Gragnola said, and the priest did not even blink. "The toadies made it up here, they've got dogs, and dogs don't give a rat's ass about fog—they go by their noses. What the hell do we do now?"

The leader of the Cossacks said, "I know how they do. One dog every five men. We go just the same, maybe we meet ones without dog."

"*Rien ne va plus*," said Gragnola the learned. "We do go slow. And we do shoot only if I say. We prepare handkerchiefs or rags, and other ropes." Then he explained to me, "We'll hurry to the end of the lane and stop at the corner. If no one's there, we'll go right through the wall and be gone. If anyone comes and they've got dogs, we're fucked. If it comes to it, we'll shoot at them and the dogs, but it depends how many they are. If, on the other hand, they don't have dogs, we'll let them pass, come up behind them, bind their hands, and stick rags in their mouths, so they can't yell."

"And then leave them there?"

"Yeah, right. No, we take them with us into the gorge, there's nothing else for it."

He quickly explained all that again to the Cossack, who repeated it to his men.

The priest gave us some rags, and some cords from the holy vestments. "Go, go," he was saying, "and God protect you."

We headed down the lane. At the corner, we heard German voices coming from the left, but no barks or yelps.

We pressed flat against the wall. We heard two men approaching, talking to each other, probably cursing the fact that they could not see where they were going. "Only two," Gragnola explained with signs. "Let them pass, then on them."

The two Germans, who had been sent to comb that area while the others took the dogs around the piazza, were going along almost on tiptoe, with their rifles pointed, but they could not even see that a lane was there, and so they passed it. The Cossacks threw themselves on the two shadows and showed that they were good at what they did. In a flash, the two men were on the ground with rags in their mouths, each one held by two of those demoniacs, while a third tied their hands behind them.

"We did it," Gragnola said. "Now you, Yambo, toss their rifles over the wall, and you, push the Germans behind us, down where we go."

I was terrified, and now Gragnola became the leader. Getting through the wall was easy. Gragnola passed out the ropes. The problem was that, except for the first and the last in line, each person had to have both hands occupied, one for the front rope and the other for the back rope. But if you have to push two trussed Germans, you cannot hold a rope, and for the first ten steps the group went forward by shoving, until we slipped into the first thickets. At that point, Gragnola tried to reorganize the rope system. Each man who was leading a German tied his rope to his prisoner's gun belt. Each who was following held onto the prisoner's collar with his right hand, and with his left held onto the rope of the man behind him. But, just as we were preparing to set off again, one of the Germans tripped and fell onto the guard in front of him, taking the one behind with him, and the chain was broken. Under their breath, the Cossacks hissed what must have been curses in their language, but they had the good sense to do so without shouting.

One German, after the initial fall, tried to get back up and distance himself from the group. Two Cossacks began groping their way after him and might have lost him, except that he did not know where he was going, either, and after a few steps he slipped and fell forward, and they had him again. In the confusion, his helmet fell off. The leader of the Cossacks made it clear that we should not leave it there, because if the dogs came they could follow the scent and would track us down. Only then did we realize that the second German was bareheaded. "God damn those bastards," Gragnola murmured. "His helmet fell off when we took him in the alley. If they get there with their dogs, they'll have the scent!"

Nothing for it. And, indeed, we had gone only a few metres farther when we heard voices from above, and dogs barking. "They've reached the alley, the animals have sniffed the helmet, and they're saying we've come this way. Stay calm and quiet. First, they have to find the gap in the wall, and if you don't know it it's not easy. Second, they have to get down. If their dogs are cautious and go slow, they'll go slow, too. If the dogs go fast, they won't be able to keep up and will fall on their asses. They don't have you, Yambo. Go as fast as you can, let's move."

"I'll try, but I'm scared."

"You're not scared, just nervous. Take a deep breath and move."

I was about to piss myself, like the priest, but at the same time I knew that everything depended on me. My teeth were clenched, and in that moment I would rather have been Giraffone or Jojo than Romano the Legionnaire; Horace Horsecollar or Clarabelle Cow than Mickey Mouse in the House of Seven Haunts; Signor Pampurio in his apartment than Flash Gordon in the swamps of Arboria, but when you are on the dance floor there is nothing to do but dance. I started down the gorge as fast as I could, replaying each step in my mind.

The two prisoners were slowing us down; with the rags in their mouths they had a hard time breathing and paused every minute. After at least fifteen minutes we came to the boulder, and I was so sure of where it was that I touched it with my outstretched hand before I could even see it. We had to stay close together as we went around it, because if anyone veered right he would come to the ledge and the ravine. The voices above us could still be heard distinctly, but it was unclear whether that was because the Germans were yelling louder to incite their reluctant dogs, or whether they had made it past the wall and were approaching.

The two prisoners, hearing their comrades' voices, tried to jerk away, and when they weren't actually falling they were pretending to fall, trying to roll off to the side, unafraid of injuring themselves. They had realized that we could not shoot them, because of the noise, and that wherever they ended up the dogs would find them. They no longer had anything to lose, and, like anyone with nothing to lose, they had become dangerous.

Suddenly, we heard machine-gun fire. Not being able to come down, the Germans had decided to fire. But they had almost a hundred and eighty degrees of the gorge in front of them and no idea which way we had gone, so they were firing all over the place. Also, they had not realized how steep the gorge was, and they were firing almost horizontally. When they fired in our direction, we could hear the bullets whistling over our heads.

"Let's move, let's move," Gragnola said. "They still won't get us."

But the first Germans must have begun climbing down, getting an idea of the slope of the terrain, and the dogs must have begun heading in a more precise direction. Now they were shooting down, and more or less at us. We heard some bullets murmur through nearby bushes.

"No fear," the Cossack said. "I know the *Reichweite* of their *Maschinen*."

"The range of those machine guns," Gragnola offered.

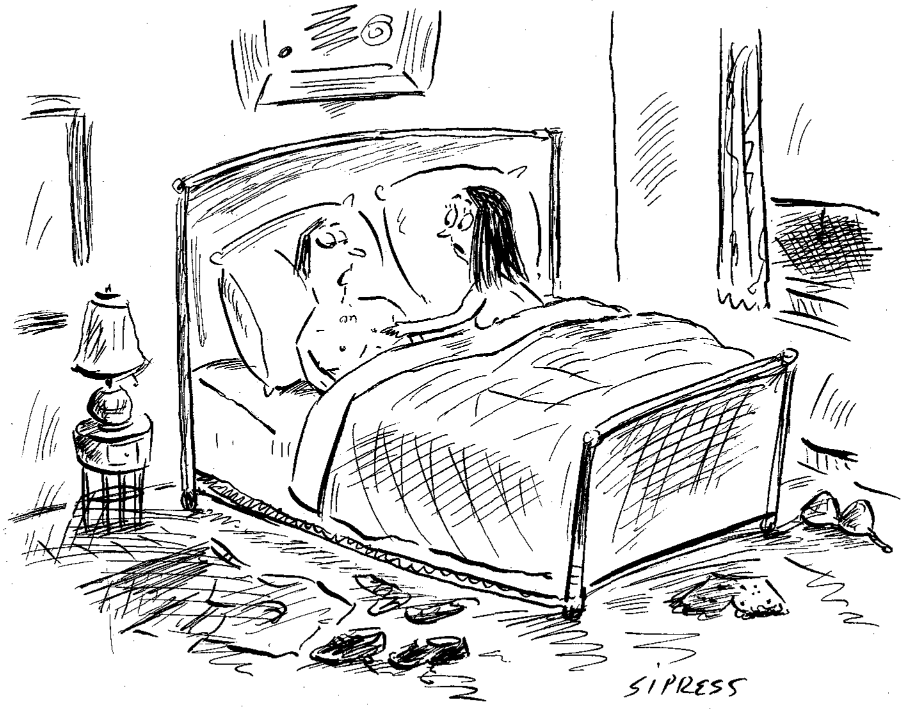
"Yes, that. If they do not come more far down and we go fast, then the bullets will not reach to us anymore. So quick."

"Gragnola," I said, with huge tears in my eyes, "I can go quicker, but the rest of you can't. You can't drag these two with us, there's no point in me running down like a goat if they keep holding us up. Let's leave them here, or I swear I'm taking off on my own."

"If we leave them here, they'll get loose in a flash and call down the others," Gragnola said.

"I kill them with the butt of machine gun, that makes no noise," the Cossack hissed.

The idea of killing those two poor men froze me, but I regained my composure when Gragnola growled, "It's no good, God damn it, even if we leave them here dead, the dogs will find them, and the others will know which way we've gone. There's only one thing to



“I’m sorry, I need it to be on the Internet.”

do: cause them to fall in some other direction, so the dogs will go that way and we might gain ten minutes or even more. Yambo, to the right here, isn’t there that false path that leads to the ravine? Good, we’ll push them down there, you said that anyone going that way won’t notice the ledge and will fall easily, then the dogs will lead the Germans to the bottom. Before they can recover from that blow, we’re in the valley. A fall from there will kill them, right?”

“No, I didn’t say that a fall from there would definitely kill them. You’ll break bones, if you’re unlucky you might hit your head . . .”

“God damn you, how come you said one thing and now you’re saying another? So maybe their ropes will come loose as they’re falling, and when they come to a stop they’ll still have enough breath to yell and warn the others to be careful!”

“Then they must fall when they are already dead,” the Cossack, who knew how things worked in this dirty world, commented.

I was right next to Gragnola and could see his face. He had always been pale, but he was paler now. He stood there gazing upward, as if seeking inspiration from the heavens. In that moment, we heard a *frr frrr* of bullets passing near us at the level of a man’s head. One of the Germans shoved his guard and both fell to the ground, and the Cossack started complaining because the first one was butting him in the teeth with his head, gambling everything and trying to make noise. That was when Gragnola made his decision and said, “It’s them or us. Yambo, if I go right, how many steps before the ledge?”

“Ten steps, ten of mine, maybe eight for you, but if you push your foot out in front of you you’ll feel it start to slope away, and from that point to the ledge it’s four steps. To be safe, take three.”

“O.K.,” Gragnola said, turning to the Cossack. “I’ll go forward, two of you push these two toadies, hold them tight by the shoulders. Everybody else stays here.”

“What are you going to do?” I asked, my teeth chattering.

“You shut up. This is war. Wait here with them. That’s an order.”

They disappeared to the right of the boulder, swallowed by the fog. We waited several minutes, heard the skittering of stones and several thuds, then Gragnola and the two Cossacks reappeared, without the Germans. “Let’s move,” Gragnola said. “Now we can go faster.”

He put a hand on my arm and I could feel him trembling. Now that he was closer I could see him again: he was wearing a sweater that was snug around his neck, and the lancet case was hanging over his chest, as if he had taken it out. “What did you do with them?” I asked, crying.

“Don’t think about it, it was the right thing. The dogs will smell the blood and that’s where they’ll lead the others. We’re safe, let’s go.”

And when he saw that my eyes were bulging out: “It was them or us. Two instead of ten. It’s war. Let’s go.”

After nearly half an hour, during which we kept hearing angry shouts and barking from above, but not coming toward us, indeed getting farther away, we reached the bottom of the gorge, and the road. Gigio’s truck was waiting nearby, in the cluster of trees. Gragnola loaded the Cossacks onto it. “I’m going with them, to make sure they reach the Badogliani,” he said. He was trying not to look at me—he was in a hurry to see me leave. “You go on from here, get back home. You’ve been strong. You deserve a medal. And don’t think about the rest. You did your duty. If anyone is guilty of anything, it’s me alone.”

I returned home sweating, despite the cold, and exhausted. Maybe I was running a fever. *I have to confess, I have to confess*, I kept saying to myself.

The next morning was worse. I had to get up more or less at the usual hour, and Mamma could not understand why I was so addle-brained. Several hours later, Gigio showed up at our house. I signalled to him to meet me in the vineyard. He couldn’t hide anything from me.

Gragnola had escorted the Cossacks to the Badogliani, then returned, with Gigio and the truck, to Solara. The Badogliani had told them that they should not go around at night unarmed: they had learned that a detachment of Black Brigades had gone to Solara to assist their comrades. They gave Gragnola a musket.

The trip to and from the Vignoletta crossroads took a total of three hours. They returned the truck to Bercelli’s farm, then set out walking on the road to Solara. After all that tension, they were trying to cheer each other up, slapping each other on the back, making noise.

And so they failed to notice that the men from the Black Brigades were crouching in a ditch, and they were caught, barely two kilometres from town. They had weapons on them when they were taken and could *not* explain them away. They were thrown into the back of a van. There were only five of the Fascists, two up front, two in back facing them, and one standing on the front running board, to help see better in the fog.

The Fascists hadn't bothered to tie them up, since the two who were guarding them were sitting with submachine guns across their laps, and Gigio and Gragnola had been thrown down like sacks. At a certain point, Gigio heard a strange noise, like fabric tearing, and felt a viscous liquid spray him in the face. One of the Fascists heard a gasp, turned on a flashlight, and there was Gragnola, lancet in hand, with his throat cut. The two Fascists started cursing, stopped the van, and with Gigio's help dragged Gragnola to the side of the road. He was already dead, or nearly, spilling blood everywhere. The three others had come over, too, and they were all blaming each other, saying that he couldn't croak like that because command needed to make him talk, and they would all be arrested for having been so stupid, failing to tie up the prisoners.

While they were yelling over Gragnola's body, they forgot Gigio for a moment and he, in the confusion, thought, Now or never. He took off across the ditch, knowing there was a steep slope beyond it. They fired a few shots, but he had already rolled to the bottom of the ditch like an avalanche, and then hidden among some trees. In that fog, he would have been a needle in a haystack, and the Fascists weren't too interested in making a big deal out of it, because it was obvious by then that they had to hide Gragnola's body and go back to their command pretending they hadn't taken anyone that night, in order to avoid trouble with their leaders.

That morning, after the Black Brigades left to meet up with the Germans, Gigio had taken a few friends to the site of the tragedy, and, after searching the ditches awhile, they found Gragnola. The priest of Solara would not allow the corpse in the church, because Gragnola had been an anarchist and by now it was known that he was a suicide, too, but Don Cognasso said to bring him to the little church at the Oratorio, since the Lord knew the proper rules better than his priests.

Gragnola was dead. He had saved the Cossacks, got me back safely, and then died. I knew perfectly well how it had happened, he had foretold it too many times. He was a coward and feared that if they tortured him he would talk, would name names, sending his comrades to the slaughterhouse. It was for them he had died. Just like that, *sffft*, as I was sure he had done with the two Germans—a kind of Dantesque poetic justice, perhaps. The courageous death of a coward. He had paid for the only violent act of his life, and in the process purged himself of that remorse he was carrying within him and would no doubt have found unbearable. He had screwed them all: Fascists, Germans, and God, in a single stroke. *Sffft.*

Even in my memories, the fog is thinning. I now see the partisans entering Solara in triumph, and on April 25th comes the news of Milan's liberation. People swarm the streets, the partisans shoot into the air, they arrive perched on the fenders of their trucks. A few days later, I see a soldier, dressed in olive drab, bicycling up the drive between the rows of horse-chestnut trees. He lets me know that he is Brazilian, then goes happily off to explore his exotic surroundings. Were there Brazilians, too, with the Americans and the British? No one had ever told me that. *Drôle de guerre.*

The news of the German surrender arrives. Hitler is dead. The war is over. In Solara there is a huge party in the streets, people hugging each other, some dancing to the sounds of an accordion.

I emerge from the tragedy, amid a crowd of radiant people, with the images of the two Germans falling into the ravine and of Gragnola, virgin and martyr—out of fear, out of love, and out of spite.

I lack the courage to go to Don Cognasso and confess . . . and, besides, confess what? Something I did not do, or even see, but only guessed at? Not having anything to ask forgiveness for, I cannot even be forgiven. It's enough to make a person feel damned forever. ♦

(*Translated, from the Italian, by Geoffrey Brock.*)

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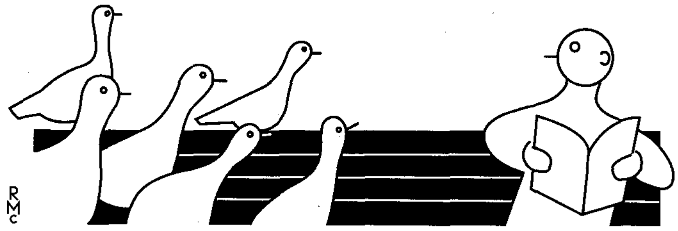

BOOKS

VOLTAIRE'S GARDEN

The philosopher as a campaigner for human rights.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Voltaire, like God, whom he patronized, is always there. "No authors ever had so much fame in their own lifetime as Pope and Voltaire," Dr. Johnson dogmatized in the late eighteenth century, and though Pope still sings for those with ears to hear him, Voltaire still squabbles, a more lifelike sound, and does it everywhere. On the Op-Ed page of the *Times*, he can ornament Paul Krugman or offend William Safire, and he is fun to read about, no matter what he is doing. In fact, he is most fun to read about when what he is doing is doing good, since he does good without being pious, an unusual mixture. For all that he was a mad egomaniac and an unabashed self-promoter, he remains matchlessly entertaining company, incapable of either shame or shoddy thinking.

There are at least three distinct Voltaires. First is the scandalous Voltaire, who by the seventeen-twenties had become the leading controversialist in France, with a series of topically loaded plays and poems, only to be thrown into the Bastille twice for being generally annoying, and in 1726 get exiled to England, where he absorbed and wrote about English learning and English parliamentary institutions. Next, there is the scientific Voltaire, who returned to France in 1728 and eventually became the lover and disciple of the brilliant Mme. Châtelet, and who, closeted with her at her Château de Cire, wrote on math and science and did more than almost anyone else to bring the news of Newtonian physics to Europe. Then, from the seventeen-fifties until his death, in 1778, there is the socially conscious Voltaire, the Voltaire who became one of the first human-rights campaigners in Europe, and whose determination to remake the world one soul at a time W. H. Auden could still idealize in 1939, in his poem "Voltaire at Ferney." ("And still all over Europe stood the horrible nurses / Itching to boil their children. Only his verses / Perhaps could stop them: He must go on working.")

Although no single volume in English does justice to all the Voltaires, the second, scientific Voltaire, at least, inspired one of the most blissfully entertaining books in the language, Nancy Mitford's 1954 "Voltaire in Love," an account of his great affair with Mme. Châtelet and of their joint introduction to the pleasures of sex and calculus. It is de rigueur to dismiss Mitford as a reckless amateur who, as someone said, made the Enlightenment *philosophes* into members of her family. But they *were* members of her family—or more like them than they were like the kind of responsible, well-read, judicious dons, offering syntheses of current thought, beloved of academic historians. Voltaire spent his life with society people and show people, and lived in terror of boredom, not inconsistency. Mitford understands Voltaire's mixture of bad faith, irascible egotism, genuine altruism, and sporadic courage, all played out in an atmosphere of petty literary politicking—in part because the type remains intact in France to this day.

Ian Davidson, a longtime correspondent for the *Financial Times*, has, in his new book, "Voltaire in Exile" (Grove; $24), taken on the story of the last Voltaire. This Voltaire evolves out of the two others; in fact, they are still right there. The old, good Voltaire was exactly the same man as the young rascal, and the rascality fuelled the goodness with energy and mischief. Yet the transformation is complete: in 1753, at the beginning of Davidson's story, Voltaire was, in contemporary terms, like Michael Moore and Susan Sontag all mixed up: a provocateur who was also a universal literary celebrity. By the end, he was more like a cross between Andrei Sakharov and Mr. Toad of Toad Hall—a conceited grand bourgeois with a big house who was also one of the first dissidents, embodying a whole alternative set of values, and who came to be treated even by the government almost as an independent state within a state. How this came about, and without any Tolstoyan repentance or self-remaking, is one of the great stories of literary evolution.

Davidson tells it well, too. In 1753, Voltaire was in flight from Frederick the Great, of Prussia, who had taken him in as a kind of house philosopher at Potsdam. Voltaire may have imagined that he would rule hand in hand, philosopher and king, but soon discovered that he was there merely as an exotic intellectual toy. ("We shall squeeze the orange," Frederick had said, secretly, "then, when we have swallowed the juice, we shall throw it away.") Even after the falling-out with Frederick, Voltaire knew that he had some big guns on his side. The foreign minister of France, the Duke de Choiseul, was a fan, as was Mme. Pompadour, the King's mistress, not to mention the Empress of Russia. He was also, luckily, very rich, in no small part because of his participation in a bizarre swindle devised by a mathematician friend, who, back in 1728, realized that the French government had authorized a lottery in which the prize was much greater than the collective cost of the tickets. He and Voltaire formed a syndicate, collected all the money, and became moneylenders to the great houses of Europe.

Voltaire ended up as a cross between Andrei Sakharov and Mr. Toad of Toad Hall—a grand bourgeois who was also a dissident.

During his escape from Frederick,

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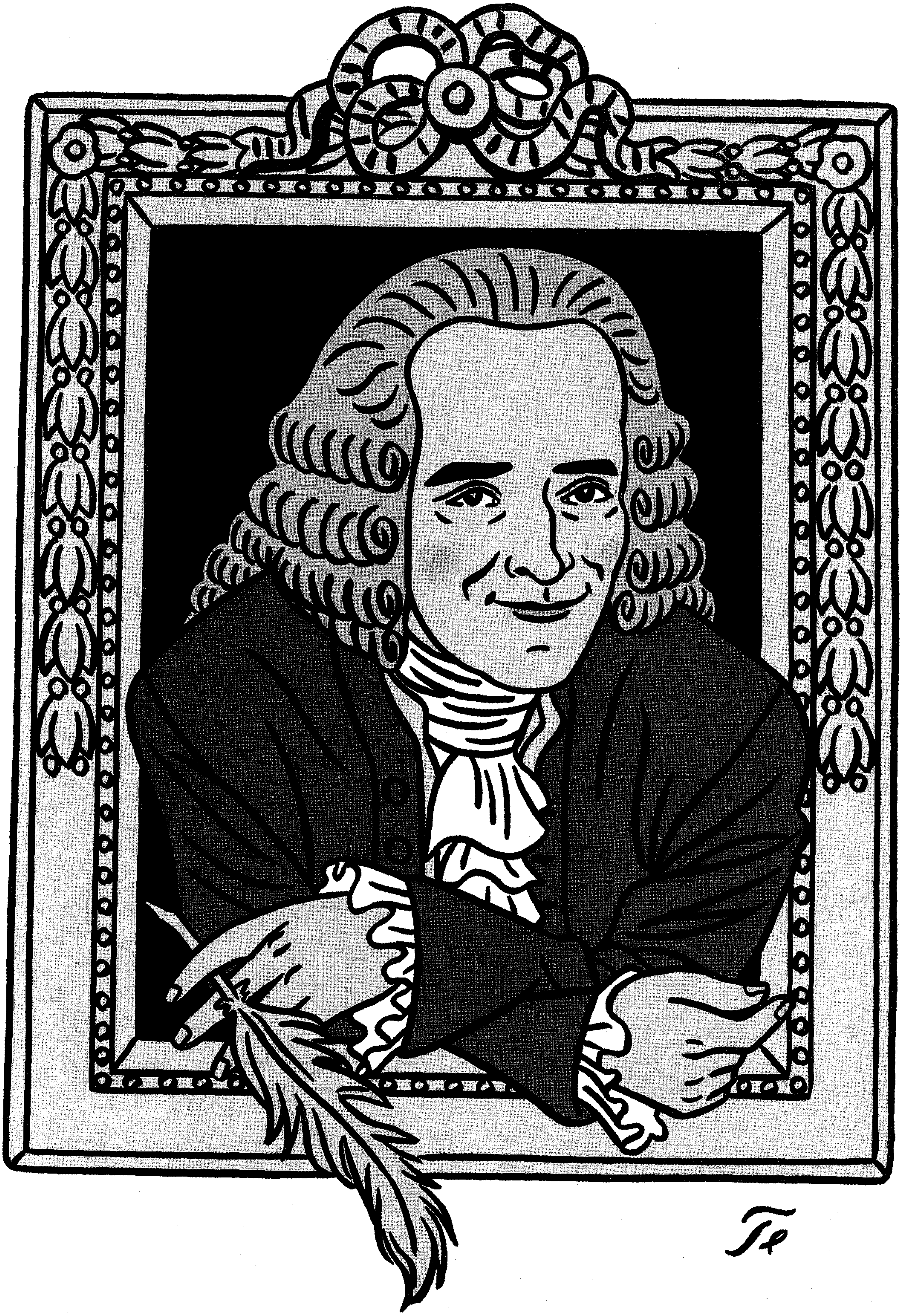

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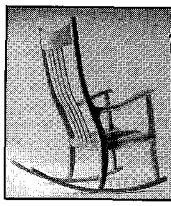

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Voltaire first thought of going back to France, which he loved as only Frenchmen who have been away from it can. But a message from his old friend Mme. Pompadour confirmed the stunning news that the King had exiled him and forbidden him to return. (This turned out to be not quite true; the old man had probably said something merely pettish, like "Tell him to stay away!") The terms of his exile were unclear, but Voltaire decided to move someplace close enough to feel like France and far enough away to keep him out of the official grip. He chose Geneva, which was then a small, suspicious Calvinist Protestant city-state. Through the good offices of a prominent Geneva friend, he found, and managed to rent, a small estate. He moved in with his new love, Mme. Denis, and renamed the villa Les Délices, the Delights. Although it was his later, sister retreat at Ferney that became legendary (he moved there in 1765, after a series of feuds with the Calvinist authorities in Geneva), it was his escape to Les Délices that marked a new epoch in his life.

Voltaire's work, to this point, consisted essentially of a mass of journalism, essays, poems, potted, vivid histories, and historical plays all pulled together in the public imagination by a single strong personality. The "philosophy" that ran through it, though allergic to sectarian piety, was still officially Deist—partly because this was insurance against accusations of atheism, partly because, in a slightly condescending spirit, Voltaire was in favor of a benign, supervisory God in the way that British leftists used to be in favor of the Queen, or in the way that Yankee free agents are in favor of Joe Torre; it's nice to think that someone genial is overseeing things. But there doesn't seem to be any evidence that he actually believed, with any intensity or appetite, in "spiritual" experience, or found the sense of God's presence even momentarily engaging. But then Voltaire was never exactly a "philosopher" in the conventional sense; his philosophy is almost always a moral instinct rendered as a dramatic gesture, rather than consecutive thoughts turned into a logical argument. As with Victor Hugo and Zola, his moral instincts were so good that we still intellectualize the dramatic gestures they became.

He quickly turned his exile into a desirable condition—a version of the ancient Horatian ideal of escape from the corrupting city into a small enclosed country house. Pope had done the same thing when he built his grotto at his little house in Twickenham, and wrote about it as enthusiastically. Yet Pope's grotto is playful, an obvious mock hermitage. Voltaire's ideas were far more bourgeois; he wanted to play host to as many people as he could, and to build the sweetest garden he could, and, after renting the villa, he started shopping like Martha Stewart newly freed from prison.

There are few more premonitory or touching documents than Voltaire's shopping lists. He demanded green olive oil, eight wing armchairs, rosewood commodes, and furniture covers in red morocco. He hired two master gardeners, twenty workmen, and twelve servants. He ordered the best coffee and crate after crate of wine (though, odd reminder of another time, he drank his Burgundies and laid down his Beaujolais). He decided to paint the trellises green, the tiles red, and the doors either white or "a fine yellow." He wrote to his agent asking for "artichoke bulbs and as much as possible of lavender, thyme, rosemary, mint, basil, rue strawberry bushes, pinks, thadicee, balm, tarragon, sariette, burnet, sage and hyssop to cleanse our sins, etc." When he wrote that it was our duty to cultivate our garden, he really knew what it meant to cultivate a garden.

It was a garden with a principle. It represented what he saw as a new, French ideal of domestic happiness, windows wide and doors open, "simplicity" itself. "We have finally come to enjoy luxury only in taste and convenience," he wrote in those years, in his history "The Age of Louis XIV": "The crowd of pages and liveried servants has disappeared." All that counted now was "affable manners, simple living and the culture of the mind." Of course, it was a very Petit Trianon simplicity. As Davidson shows, though, it was deeply, emotionally rich: "He was enjoying real happiness, for the first time in his life."

It was at this moment of delight and apparent retreat, of affable manners and simple living, that he began the series of crusades that eventually blossomed into the human-rights campaigns that came to dominate the rest of his life. It would be nice to say that Voltaire was a courageous man whom no amount of comfort could seduce. The truth is that, as his friend Condorcet wrote sadly, he was easily terrified, and often a coward: "He was often seen to expose himself to the storm, almost with temerity, but seldom to stand up to it with firmness." And, of course, no man of fewer sublime feelings has ever lived; he was baffled by religion and spirituality, materialist and carnal to the core.

What motivated him, then, to start up? Partly it must have been that he so much enjoyed vexing stupid powerful people that he kept forgetting that stupid people who had gained power were never stupid about threats to their power. Each time he poked the silly tiger and the tiger clawed back, he was genuinely shocked. And then there is a kind of egotism so vast and so pleased with itself that it includes other people as an extension of itself. Voltaire felt so much for other people because he felt so much for himself; everything happened to him because he was the only reasonable subject of everything that happened. By inflating his ego to immense proportions, he made it a shelter for the helpless.

But there was something else, too. His exile moved him away from court practices and court values, with their hypersensitivity toward status, toward family practices and family values, with their hypersensitivity toward security. (In these Délices years, he took in and later adopted a teen-age daughter, and began to sigh that he had never had children of his own.) As Tocqueville saw half a century later, home-making, which ought to make people more selfish, makes them less so; it gives them a stake in other people's houses. It is not so much the establishment of a garden but the ownership of a gate that moves people from liking a society based on favors to one based on rights. Enclosing his garden broadened Voltaire's circle of compassion. When people were dragged from *their* gardens to be tortured and killed in the name of faith, he began to take it, as they say, personally.

In those days, unspeakably cruel tortures were still routine in the French penal system. Condemned criminals were tortured by being broken on the wheel—that is, being bound on a scaffold to a wheel and then having their bones broken, one by one, with an iron bar. Davidson suggests (shrewdly and originally) that Voltaire's sense of outrage may have been galvanized by the hideous execution in Paris of the would-be assassin of Louis XV, the mad Damiens, in 1757. Damiens was pulled apart alive, his limbs attached to four horses and the horses driven in different directions, for public instruction in the center of Paris. Voltaire was no fan of regicide. It was because he was for the execution that the public torture frightened him: it was a sign of how quickly civilities could disintegrate under threat. ("Enlightened times will only enlighten a small number of honest men," he wrote. "The common people will always be fanatical.") He coined his most famous phrase, *Écrasez l'infâme*—"Crush the horror"—and began to use it, in jauntily (and evasively) abbreviated form. Historians have fussed for centuries about exactly what Voltaire meant by it—the Catholic Church? the Court?—but it's clear. The horror was the alliance of religious fanaticism with the instruments of the state, and the two combined for torture and official murder.

It is against this background, of a garden built and the encroaching fanatics, that Voltaire wrote "Candide," in 1759. Two fine new translations of the book have just appeared, one by Burton Raffel (Yale; $22) and one by Peter Constantine (Modern Library; $19.95). The young Candide lives in the little German principality of Thunder Ten Tronck, under the guidance of his tutor, Pangloss, a theorist of optimism. A liaison with his beloved Cunégonde causes him to be exiled, and soon afterward the principality is sacked by the Bulgars, who rape Cunégonde and leave Pangloss for dead. Candide then encounters every kind of eighteenth-century horror, from enslavement by the Turks to bondage on a French galley, and ends up on a little farm near Constantinople, wisely counselling Pangloss that the only worthwhile thing for people to do is to cultivate their gardens.

"Candide" is such a familiar book that it is easy to miss its real target. What marks it off from most other didactic literature, as Davidson says, is its gaiety; the disembowellings and rapes are drawn with breezily overdone matter-of-factness. The tone is like that of the Monty Python movies, which are genuinely appalled by violence but register their shock by making

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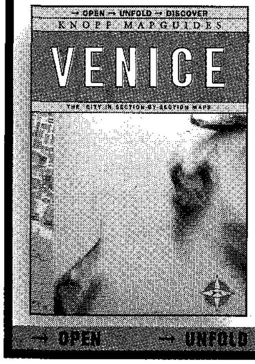
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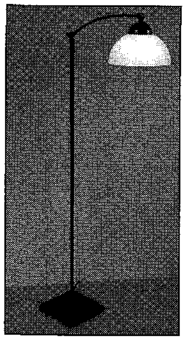

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it absurd. "Candide" is said to have been occasioned by the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, a tsunami-like event, and is meant to satirize the optimism associated with Leibniz. It is also usually said to be unfair to Leibniz, a great philosopher, who was among the inventors of calculus. Leibniz's view, after all, was not that everything was good but that our world was the best *possible*. Given that God could have considered every world before he made it, he must have chosen the best one—so that if there is suffering and evil in it, these things must have a cause in the mind of God. Given that the deity is benevolent, small-scale pain must be part of some universal balance, or, as Pope puts it in his "Essay on Man," "All discord harmony not understood; / All partial evil, universal good." Leibniz and Pope after him are arguing not that life will always be happy but that the world is optimally designed. Suffering is explicable—not defensible but explicable.

But Voltaire was not unfair to Leibniz. He understood exactly what Leibniz was saying, and has Pangloss say it. On the tutor's first appearance, he gives the classic instance: pigs are made to be eaten and so we have pork. It seems hard only from the narrow point of view of the pig. "Those who have suggested that everything is good have spoken obtusely," Pangloss explains, in Raffel's rendering. "What they should have said is that everything is for the best." Voltaire's point was that the two ideas are, in concrete terms, the same idea. Insisting that everything is for the best means finding the best in everything. To subsume individual suffering or pain within a larger equilibrium is to accept the logic of the slaughterhouse. The pig has a right to his protest.

Voltaire's target throughout "Candide" is not optimism in the sense of fatuous cheerfulness but optimism in the sense of optimal thinking: the kind of bland reassurance that explains pain with reference to a larger plan or history. In this way, the Christmas tsunami cannot have for Voltaire's readers today anything approaching the force that a natural disaster like the Lisbon earthquake had for the eighteenth century. Few people any longer believe in a benevolent nature—much less a benevolent nature sitting in for a providential God. We can feel comfortably superior to Leibniz's particular brand of optimism, which is centered on natural law of this kind, since we no longer believe that nature is part of an inherently balanced or benevolent system.

But almost all of us still do believe, stubbornly, in some kind of optimal thinking. We believe, vaguely or explicitly, that liberal democracy, with all its faults, is the best of all possible political systems, that globalization, with all its injustices, is the best of all possible futures, and even that the American way is the best of all possible ways—with appropriate cautious Leibnizian emphasis on "possible." (One can track the path, and the travails, of modern popular optimism just by following Thomas Friedman's columns in the *Times*, agonized Tuesday to hopeful Sunday.) We are all optimalists of this kind, perhaps reinforced by the doctrines of evolutionary psychology (which say exactly that all discord is harmony misunderstood) or by faith in an inevitable evolving "future of freedom." Attacks on these beliefs—September 11th was the most acute—shake us up the way eighteenth-century people were shaken by the Lisbon earthquake. The realization that all may not be tending toward the best, that religious fanaticism and tribal intolerance could prevail over liberal meliorism, is the earthquake of our time.

Voltaire's radicalism, then and now, lies not in his refutation of optimism but in his refusal of belief. "Candide" is not really, or entirely, a satire on optimism. It is an attack on organized religion. The joke about optimism in "Candide" is always the same joke: something terrible happens, and Pangloss gallantly rationalizes it. The jokes about religious cruelty are mordant, varied, and encyclopedic: every kind of religious intolerance—Muslim, Jewish, and, particularly, Christian, dignified, crude, and greedy—is trotted out and exposed. The one thing that Voltaire is sure of in "Candide" is the idiocy of theodicy. What drives him crazy is the ability of religious fanatics to exploit the fatality of the world in order to enact their own cruelties.

In the famous early chapter, the Lisbon earthquake makes a brief Terry Gilliam-slapstick, scene-setting appearance. What happens immediately afterward is the point of the satire: "After the earthquake, which had destroyed three quarters of Lisbon, the country's wise men could find no better way of preventing total ruin than to give the people a beautiful auto-da-fé." Voltaire goes on to detail the hideous theatrics of the Inquisition: the yellow robes, the burnings and flogging set to Church music, the whole choreography of Christian cruelty. The point of "Candide" is that the rapes and disembowelments, the enslavement and

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the beatings are not part of some larger plan, not a fact of the fatality of life and the universe, but fiendish tortures thought up by fanatics. They may be omnipresent; but they are not inevitable. Voltaire thinks optimism merely silly. It is the flight from failed optimism into faith that he fears.

Against the horrors of religious cruelty and the emptiness of religious apologia, Voltaire proposes—what, exactly? Burton Raffel, the more daring of the two new translators, takes that most familiar ending, "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin,*" and translates it not as "We must cultivate our garden" but, startlingly, as "We need to work our fields." (Raffel is a translator who doesn't mind shocking his readers—his version of "The Red and the Black" was one long provocation.) His change of the book's famous moral is obviously meant, in one way, to protect Voltaire from the charge of Petit Trianonism. After so much suffering, cultivating our garden seems too . . . *cultivated.* ("Crush the horror! Crush the horror!" Voltaire's friend D'Alembert wrote to him once. "That is easily said when one is a hundred leagues from the bastards and the fanatics, when one has an independent income of a hundred thousand livres!")

But Raffel is wrong, surely, in thinking that by cultivating one's garden Voltaire meant anything save cultivating one's garden. By "garden" Voltaire meant a garden, not a field—not the land and task to which we are chained by nature but the better place we build by love. The force of that last great injunction, "We must cultivate our garden," is that our responsibility is local, and concentrated on immediate action. In the aftermath of the tsunami, William Safire argued that this "surge of generosity" actually "refutes Voltaire's cynicism," as expressed in "Candide." Yet American charity is not a refutation of Voltaire's cynicism; it *is* Voltaire's cynicism, an expression of the Enlightenment tradition of individual responsibility that he promoted. Voltaire was a gardener and believed in gardens, even if other people were gardening them. His residual optimism lies in that alone.

The horror that Voltaire wanted crushed, cruelty in the name of God and civilization, was a specific and contingent thing. His satire of optimism is in this sense an optimistic book—optimistic not only in its gaiety, which implies the possibility of seeing things as they are, but also in its argument. Voltaire did not believe that there was any justice or balance in the world, but he believed that bad ideas made people bad. The villains in the book are not, as in Samuel Johnson's exactly contemporary and parallel "Rasselas," the fatality of the world and the mortality of man. The villains are the villains: Jesuits and Inquisitors and English judges and Muslim clerics and fanatics of all kinds. If they went away, life would be much better. He knew that the flood would get your garden no matter what you did; but you could at least try to keep the priests and the policemen off the grass. It wasn't enough, but it was something.

Though "Candide" seems to retreat from a confrontation with human cruelty to an enclosed garden, its publication marked Voltaire's, and his age's, moral development away from a passive Deism and toward a faith in liberal meliorism. Voltaire went on to a series of confrontations with the consequences of human cruelty that, two hundred-odd years later, remain stirring in their courage and perseverance. It is in the years *after* the publication of the supposedly cynical and even quietist "Candide" that he began the campaigns against persecution—and, more broadly, against torture and cruelty in punishment—from which, as Davidson says, most civilized societies can trace their liberation from organized cruelty and state killing.

Voltaire was no mere petition signer; he was intensely engaged with individual cases, and deserves credit for exposing at least two horrible judicial murders. He first took on the case of Jean Calas, a Protestant in Normandy who was wrongly accused of murdering his own son (it seems likely that the son committed suicide) to keep him from converting to Roman Catholicism. Calas was executed: publicly tortured by a judicial lynch mob of priests and local officials, and then broken on the wheel. Voltaire, after years of work, was able to show that Calas's execution had been a frame-up, and even managed to get official recompense for his family. He did the same thing, at greater personal risk, in the case of the teen-age Chevalier de La Barre, who had been accused by the Catholic authorities of desecrating a statue of the Crucifixion, under the influence of Voltaire's Dictionnaire Philosophique. Voltaire could not save his life—La Barre was tortured, and sentenced to have his tongue cut out, before he was killed and burned, along with Voltaire's book—but his writings helped make certain that La Barre was the last man to be murdered in France for blasphemy.

As though these crusades were not enough for an old man who was still busy writing plays and arguing with his neighbors about leases and noises, he also tried to demonstrate the possibilities of a garden-centered life by creating his own light industry at Ferney. He took several dozen Protestant watch-making refugees and supplied them with venture capital to start a watch factory in the village of Ferney. The thing should have gone the way of most virtuous communal schemes devised by well-meaning literary people—but it was a huge success, making as much as six hundred thousand pounds a year, and supplying watches to the Empress of Russia. (Voltaire turned out to be a brilliant salesman, using his high connections to force watches on people on consignment, and then blandly sending them bills.) It was a proof that one could do well by doing good. Ferney watches became the Ben & Jerry's ice cream of the later Enlightenment, a luxury good that was also a sign of progressive values.

Of course, in the light of later horrors, the horror that Voltaire wanted to crush doesn't seem a horror at all. It was a half-aware, corrupt, guilty, placating horror, which watched nervously as he was fêted. His enemies were local lynch mobs, not centralized terror. A Nazi or Soviet regime would have crushed him, horribly, and everyone else with him. The argument has even been made that Voltaire's rejection of moral order and God helped lead to the later horrors. But unless one believes, against all the evidence, that faith in God keeps one from cruelty, this is a bum rap. There are absolutist and totalitarian elements in the Enlightenment, of the kind that Burke and Berlin alike opposed: the desire to rip up the calendar of the past and start over implies murdering whoever isn't with the program. This wasn't Voltaire's spirit by a mile. There couldn't be a better model of an improvisatory, anti-authoritarian intelligence, whose whole creed rests on individual acts and case-by-case considerations. He believed in the English model of trade and toleration, not the Jacobin model of ideology and intemperance. His intolerance of religion was nothing like religious intolerance; it was directed at institutions, not individuals. Even his notorious attacks on Judaism are largely of this kind. Like Gibbon, what he objects to in the Old Testament is the spirit of zealous intolerance it gave to the New; about the worst thing that he could say of the Jews is that they reminded him of Jesuits. Voltaire's spirit was one of tolerant cosmopolitanism, even though he didn't have the insight to see that one challenge for the cosmopolitan spirit would be how well it tolerated those who had no wish to be cosmopolitan.

It is still bracing, at a time when the extreme deference we pay to faith has made any attack on religious beliefs unacceptable, to hear Voltaire on Jesuits and Muslims alike—to hear him howl with indignation at the madness and malignance of religion—and to be reminded that that free-thinking, which inspired Twain and Mencken, has almost vanished from our world. (There is, after all, as much of Voltaire in American life as in French life. Benjamin Franklin went to him for a blessing, and got it.)

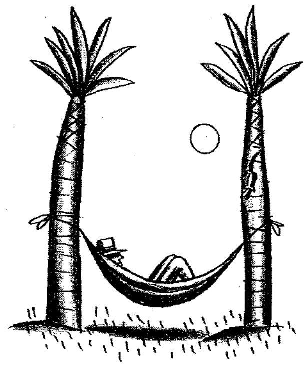
Voltaire made a good end. No Frenchman can keep away from Paris forever. When he was eighty-four, he made the trip back at last; although there was no official "pardon" (there had never been an official condemnation), he thought it unlikely that the authorities would try to do anything to him. Seeing how old he was, the Church sent emissaries to try to get him to recant. Voltaire had the priests in, and perhaps even entertained the idea of confessing—partly because he always liked toying with priests, partly because he was genuinely afraid of being thrown into a common grave, as happened to the unshriven. But finally he sighed on his deathbed, told the priest who had arrived one last time to urge on him the virtues of Jesus, "Sir, do not speak to me any more about that man and let me die in peace," and turned away. The priests, furious, and knowing that it was against the law both to bury an unsacralized body and to move it, cruelly insisted that his body could be taken from Paris to a quiet burial only if the corpse was dressed up in clothes and the pretense made that Voltaire was still alive. The joke, on them, was that he was. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Literary Lives

February House, *by Sherill Tippins (Houghton Mifflin; $24).* In 1940, George Davis, an editor recently fired from *Harper's Bazaar*, rented a dilapidated house in Brooklyn Heights in which he installed brilliant, volatile artists, who spent the next year working, fighting, and drinking. Carson McCullers sipped sherry while, down the hall, the burlesque star Gypsy Rose Lee typed her mystery novel with three-inch fingernails, and, downstairs, Benjamin Britten and Paul Bowles fought over practice space. W. H. Auden was house-mother, collecting rent, assigning chores, and declaring no politics at dinner. Tippins's book is a cozy, gossipy read, punctuated by solid, if perfunctory, literary criticism. Like all bohemian utopias, February House (so named because of the residents' February birthdays) was unable to withstand the centrifugal force of its constituent egos. The artists dispersed—to return home, serve in the military, or follow wayward lovers—and the house was demolished to make way for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

Madame de Staël, *by Maria Fairweather (Carroll & Graf; $30).* At one time, it was said that "there are three great powers in Europe: Britain, Russia and Madame de Staël." Outspoken, childish, intelligent, she lived in a tornado of social engagements, political intrigue, literary work, and love affairs. Fairweather's biography rewardingly chronicles her long career, from busy days at the court of Louis XVI through the French Revolution, the Terror, and the rise and fall of the Napoleonic empire. Growing up, she knew Gibbon, Diderot, and D'Alembert, and met Voltaire; later her circle included Talleyrand, Wellington, Goethe, Schiller, and Byron. Her temperament was legendarily volcanic. Talleyrand, hearing that she had professed herself baffled that he could have married his unintellectual wife, commented, "To understand the full value of such peace of mind, one would have to have lived under the same roof as Madame de Staël for a month!"



K, *by Roberto Calasso, translated from the Italian by Geoffrey Brock (Knopf; $25).* Kafka's fiancée once wrote to him that she had taken his handwriting to a graphologist, who detected "artistic interests." Kafka wrote back, disdainfully, "I don't have literary interests. I'm made of literature, I'm nothing else and can be nothing else." For such a writer, the erudite Italian novelist and publisher Calasso is the ideal critic. Under his patient gaze, the inner connections of Kafka's writing emerge; for instance, he sees the mysterious world of "The Castle," encountered by the land surveyor, K., as a sort of limbo into which Josef K., from Kafka's earlier novel "The Trial," has fallen. An elegant writer, Calasso is particularly attuned to the strong erotic undercurrents in Kafka's writing and is suitably wary of finding any overarching philosophy.

V. S. Pritchett, *by Jeremy Treglown (Random House; $25.95).* Pritchett's early life was rich in the juxtapositions of banality and oddity which characterize his fiction. His father was a con man and Christian Scientist, and Treglown suggests that Pritchett's talent for storytelling owed something to his father's habits of fabulism. Certainly his father was the source of much of his best material. As a child, Pritchett moved often because of his father's debts; as an adult, to write travel pieces and avoid his own. In midlife, with expanding success, he had affairs while his wife typed his manuscripts and drank. Treglown is an enthusiastic and scrupulous biographer, although much of Pritchett's long life was so uneventful that only Pritchett, you feel, could have made it dramatic.

ON TELEVISION

VISION QUEST

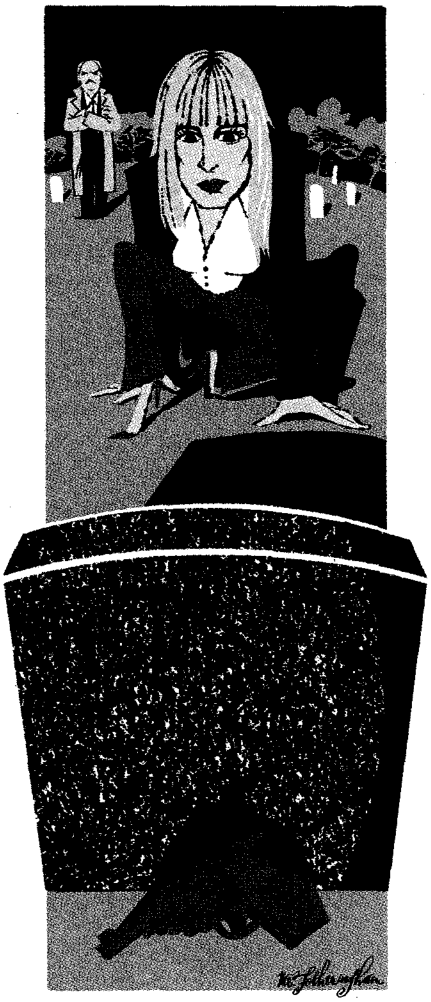
The mind of the married medium.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Is there anything more boring than other people's dreams? Much as we may find our friends interesting, their dreams, unless they involve a vivid catastrophe, or include *us*, are opaque and unrevealing; they also remind us that we're all tragically stuck inside our own heads. This is even more true on television than it is in real life, because we're constantly aware that the TV writers are just cooking up the dream as a plot device; it's almost always too literally "dreamlike," as if filmed through a gauzy filter or Vaseline, and too obviously symbolic, while at the same time seeming to be chosen from a limited menu of weird twists. The only exception I can think of in recent years is the marathon dream that Tony had in an episode of "The Sopranos" last season (it took up almost half the show), which seemed as rich, and as worthy of interpretation, as one of our own.

The new NBC series "Medium," which was created by Glenn Gordon Caron, not only regularly features a character's dreams but *hinges* on them. Patricia Arquette stars as a woman named Allison Dubois, who has encounters, both when she's asleep and when she's awake, with the spirits of dead people. The series is based on the life of a real medium of the same name, who, like the fictional Allison, is called on by law-enforcement agencies to help solve crimes. At the beginning of the first episode, the words "There really is an Allison . . ." appear against a black background, and, in case we're not convinced, the next frame says "Really." This doesn't prove anything, of course, but then the show generally doesn't waste much time trying to prove the validity of the practice of mediumship, as its peeps call it. Skepticism is given some due in the second episode: shortly after Allison has been hired as a consultant by the district attorney in Phoenix, and has begun work on a case involving the sentencing of a convicted rapist and murderer, her husband, Joe (Jake Weber), an aerospace engineer, questions her confidence in the accuracy of her visions. As it turns out, there was a "mistake," of potentially huge proportions, in one of her dreams, but in that particular case it happened not to matter; the show gets to have it both ways, establishing that Allison is only human and that she's essentially right.

Before becoming a consultant to the D.A., Manuel Devalos (Miguel Sandoval), Allison was an intern in his office, preparing for law school. It was her visions that made her decide that she was "constitutionally incapable" of being a lawyer, and she tells Devalos, "Suffice it to say, I'm apparently either a little psychic or a little psycho." Caron, who created "Moonlighting" and the 1999 series "Now and Again," knows how to blend genres, and he must have realized that he needed to add some top notes of comedy to the perfume of self-seriousness that seems to cling to all those who are paranormally inclined. Too much of the humor involves lame byplay between Allison and Joe, and it's usually excruciating. When Allison, who has three children, tells Joe that she may be pregnant again, he says, "I think we're talking table for six," and Allison says, "Relax, maître d'." Joe has an unacknowledged passive-aggressive attitude toward his wife's gifts and work habits. When she loses track of time at the office and comes home late, all he says is, "It's 10:30," or "It's 9:20." And then he smiles and says something supposedly cute about having sex, and you just wonder, When is this guy going to explode with rage? (If Haley Joel Osment were watching this series, he'd say, "I see divorced people.") Weber, a Brit, who played a broadly drawn cad in the recent HBO series "The Mind of the Married Man," goes to the opposite extreme here, uxoriously soaking up, like some SpongeJoe KhakiPants, all the confusion that Allison's disturbing powers bring to their relationship and to their family life—their daughters are ten, six, and somewhere under one—while only occasionally letting out a tiny, muffled squeak of protest.



Patricia Arquette in NBC's "Medium."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Arquette, at least, has some surprises in her. With her wide face, blond hair, and blue eyes, she looks sweet and pillowy, but she brings some steel to Allison. Still, there's no flint in the cast for her to create sparks with. As Allison and Joe drive to a dinner with colleagues of his, he worries about how she'll explain what she does for a living—partly because it's supposed to be a secret and partly because it sounds so flaky. "How are you going to put it?" he asks. "Well, gosh, dear, how would you like me to put it?" She goes on, picking up his word and stabbing him with it, "Don't worry so much about how things are put. Because everything will be put the way it needs to be put, and if you don't like the way things are put, you can just go"—here she blows him a raspberry—"yourself." His anxiety is natural, and she's a sarcastic pain about it, but every time the show tiptoes up to real confrontation it slinks away in fear. Allison's relationship with her boss is also annoyingly free of conflict. Perhaps this is the way things are with the real Allison Dubois—or perhaps the show is this way because the real Dubois is a consultant to the series.

When it comes to the crime-solving and to Allison's visions, which could have been the weak points of "Medium," however, the show shines. What Allison sees is invariably disturbing to us as well as to her; we watch with vigilance, ready to avert our eyes, even in a seemingly garden-variety dream in which Allison is being chased through an empty airport by a wolf. The show is well shot—details like the ghostly light on the highly polished airport floors amplify the sense of threat, and they stay in your mind—and it benefits from an unusually stylish title sequence, with a graphic design that recalls the work of the great designer Saul Bass and a theme, by Mychael Danna, that has more than a little Bernard Herrmann in it. "Medium" has managed, so far, to be inventive in its storytelling, and Arquette, whose character often seems sleep-deprived and sad, gets at the emotional toll it takes on Allison to be caught in the middle of the hold that the dead have on the living.

Also at ten o'clock on Monday nights, over on ABC, another blue-eyed woman with special powers is helping to solve crimes of a different nature. On the reality show "Supernanny," Jo Frost, a no-nonsense but warm British nanny (she's a little like the image her name calls up—a jolly, plump, animated snowwoman), helps American families deal with their monstrously out-of-control children and their own clueless parenting behavior. The keys to family happiness, in the world according to Jo, are routine, consistency, and respect—on both sides. Frost isn't pushing a law-and-order agenda; she's more interested in justice and harmony. She makes it look so simple, too—all you have to do is draw up a family schedule on a whiteboard and stick to it. When your children go ballistic, get down to their eye level and talk to them. If they don't listen, have them sit for a few minutes in the "naughty room." There is something here for everyone: people without children will enjoy watching know-it-all parents being stripped of their smugness; people with children will learn how to improve the lives of everyone in their family; and people who used to be children will find new answers for why they themselves turned out so badly. ♦

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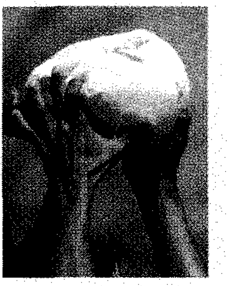

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THE ART WORLD

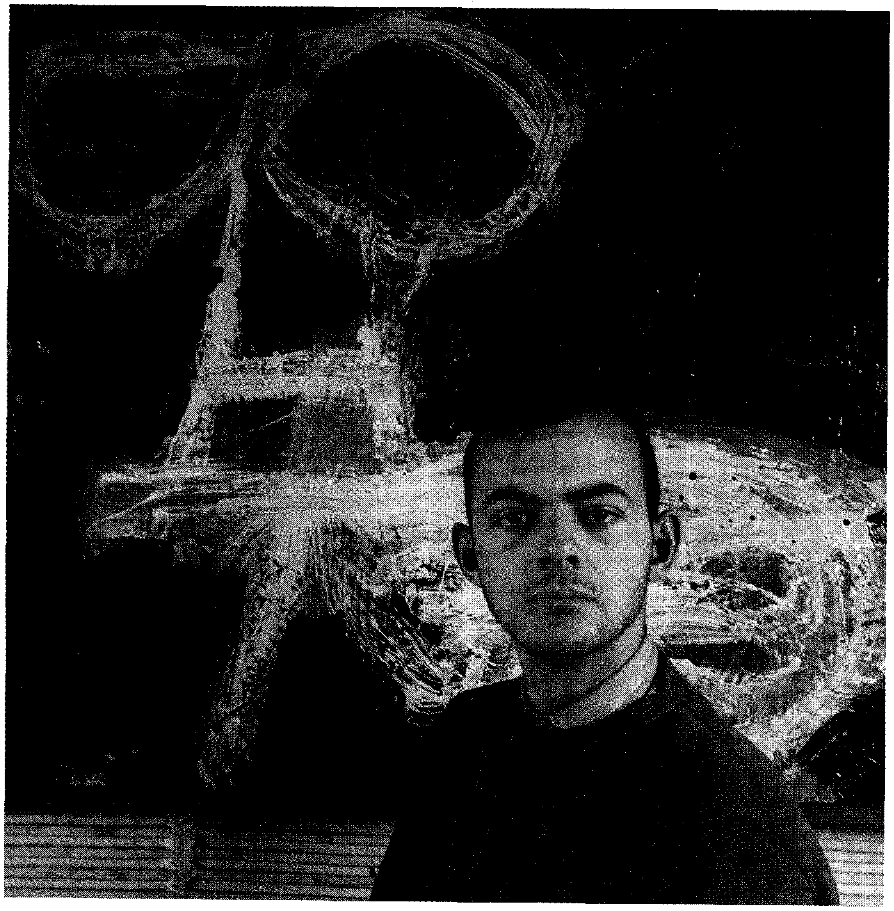
DRAWING LINES

Cy Twombly at the Whitney.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Cy Twombly was twenty-five years old in 1953, when, at the borrowed studio of Robert Rauschenberg, on Fulton Street, he made some of the inauspicious-looking monoprints and pencil drawings that open "Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper," an absorbing, uneven show at the Whitney. These are loose, gawky glyphs of spiky, unidentifiable flora or fauna. Their manner suggests both the guilelessness of small children and the insolence of graffitists, but a lurking sophistication points to certain modern predecessors, mostly European, from Alfred Jarry to Alberto Giacometti, Jean Dubuffet, and Wols. Twombly, who grew up around Washington and Lee University, in Lexington, Virginia, where his father coached athletics, was already far advanced in an extraordinarily rich personal and artistic initiation. He had been steeped in modern and contemporary art in Boston and New York, where he met Rauschenberg, and at Black Mountain College, in North Carolina, where he met Robert Motherwell, who took an interest in him and, in 1951, arranged for his first New York gallery show, which included paintings strongly influenced by Franz Kline. Twombly had lived in Rome and travelled, with Paul Bowles, in Morocco. Even his brief military service, as a cryptographer in Washington, D.C., was exotic, though undistinguished. "I was a little too vague for that," he said, according to Roland Barthes—whose striking 1976 essay on the artist appears in the catalogue of this show. (Remarks by Twombly are scarce; he almost never gives interviews.) In 1957, the artist moved to Italy, which became the home base for a roving life with many sojourns on dreamy Mediterranean, Caribbean, and Indian islands. Written names in some of his pictures conjure sea-scented, rather easy whiffs of myth and history: Adonais, Proteus, Anabasis.

A bohemian aristocrat, the young Twombly might have been a model for a character in a novel by E. M. Forster or Somerset Maugham—a kind that was no longer being written. Today, at the age of seventy-six, he remains a slippery figure, not quite of our time yet not of any other. He is also a major and growing success, enshrined in museums, and a sensational performer at auction, commanding prices in the millions—"the biggest long shot of our era," in the words of a friend, the late composer Morton Feldman. This could not have been predicted in the nineteen-sixties, when Pop art and minimalism reigned. The support of Twombly's confederates Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns did not prevent a weak show, in 1964, at the Leo Castelli Gallery, from being a critical disaster; the paintings' School of Paris airs betrayed the artist's obliviousness of revolutionary developments in New York. (He later said that the event left him "the happiest painter around, for a couple of years: no one gave a damn what I did." In fact, he did little until late in the decade.) At that time, even Twombly's better work struck many as an unnecessary, epicene response to Abstract Expressionism. Some of his paintings—seemingly random distributions of smudges and scribbles on large canvases—were like Jackson Pollocks drained of intensity, and his way with line could suggest slack, nerveless Arshile Gorky. But it is precisely as an attenuated Abstract Expressionist that Twombly has won a place in history. He preserved the Romantic subjectivity of a movement that, as American culture turned witheringly skeptical, lost all conviction. He did it by hazarding that conviction is overrated. Mere whim will serve just as well. Younger poetic abstractionists who bucked the tide of the sixties, notably Brice Marden, took heart from Twombly's heroically languorous example. Around 1980, a retroactive recognition of his influence combined with the resurgent prestige of contemporary European art to boost his fame.



Twombly at Black Mountain College, 1951. Photograph by Robert Rauschenberg.

VAGA

Twombly's works of the fifties remain his most exciting, for me. Those in the show, beginning in 1954, are flurries of impulsive line in pencil, crayon, or paint—sometimes mostly erased or overlapped with white house paint—which seem barbarically formless, yet are perversely graced with sensitive touch and texture. Like Zen koans, these drawings not only defy comprehension but stop it dead. To make a persuasively meaningless mark is harder than it looks. Your little kid can't do it. (Barthes points out that, when drawing, "a child applies himself, presses carefully, rounds things out, sticks out his tongue; it's hard work to adapt oneself to the code of the grownups.") The difficulty of the performance is evident in the fact that Twombly didn't keep it up. In the early sixties, his scattered marks sometimes congealed into self-conscious, cartoonish suggestions of visualized thought, like clumsy fragments of Paul Klee, or even Saul Steinberg. In other pictures, scrawled numbers and sketched geometric forms signify raptures of mathematical precision in a negligent, slovenly hand. I can well imagine that Twombly enjoyed this game. (So did Barthes, who derived a lively thought from the artist's degradation of graphic symbols: "The essence of an object has something to do with the way it turns into trash.") But the exercise doesn't leave a viewer much to do, beyond admiring its cleverness. I have a similar problem with Twombly's later invocations of gods and goddesses, charged with rather fey, private meanings—a fault only partly offset by a growing mastery of harshly eloquent color.

Twombly's most famous motif is also his most important: loopy tumults of line in white wax crayon on grounds of dark-gray house paint. These pictures resemble chalked blackboards, perhaps from an anti-university of deracination. They have a slam-bang, take-it-or-leave-it audacity. Five of them in the show, from 1969 to 1971, emphasize the artist's pertinence to the recent history of painting. They coincide, in date, with the sensational departure of another, older renegade Abstract Expressionist, Philip Guston: a sudden repertoire of raucously cartooned thugs and sad sacks that seemed to insult painting in order to save it. In a silkier way, Twombly's blackboards made a similar gesture. They advertise painting's supreme capacity to invest mental disorder with formal power. They do so with poised, positively decorative elegance, employing the bodily scale (which can work even at reduced size) of New York School painting. It's as if much that is lost and foolish in us were presented at court—and recognized as princely, of royal blood. Surrendering to Twombly's best art entails an odd transaction: confessing fundamental bewilderment in return for being granted a flare of exaltation. The same bargain governs our encounters with his occasional sculptures: casual-looking assemblies of scrap lumber or lumpy forms in plaster or clay, usually painted white. These mild objects suggest a sort of scatterbrained Surrealism, as if they had forgotten what they were meant to mean and, by way of compensation, stumbled into states of pleasant, lasting surprise.

It is telling that Barthes—famous for having announced the "death of the author" in literature, while amounting to an extraordinary author himself—took a shine to Twombly, whose career marks a wandering course along fault lines of personal and impersonal mindfulness in the art of the past half century. As a type of artist, Twombly most closely approximates the classic dandy: provoking and impenetrable. ("He wants to produce an effect, but at the same time he couldn't care less," Barthes says.) Yet his manipulative aestheticism is prone to all manner of breakdowns, in shifting ratios of self-absorption and empty rhetoric. There is something endearing about a concentration of so much fallibility in ambitious art. Amazingly, Twombly's candid flailing has proved to wear far better than the aggressive certainties of most fame-seeking artists, which, when they do not attain the deathless clarity of masterpieces (that is, nearly all the time), tend to become embarrassingly dated with the next turnover of artistic fashion. Twombly's best works are permanently embroiled in the present tense of their making; they would be just as fresh if created today or tomorrow. I may often get impatient with Twombly's showoffy irresoluteness and fustian poetic conceits, but if I try to imagine art of our time without his exceedingly human presence in it, I feel a global chill. ♦

POP MUSIC

RING MY BELL

The expensive pleasures of the ringtone.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

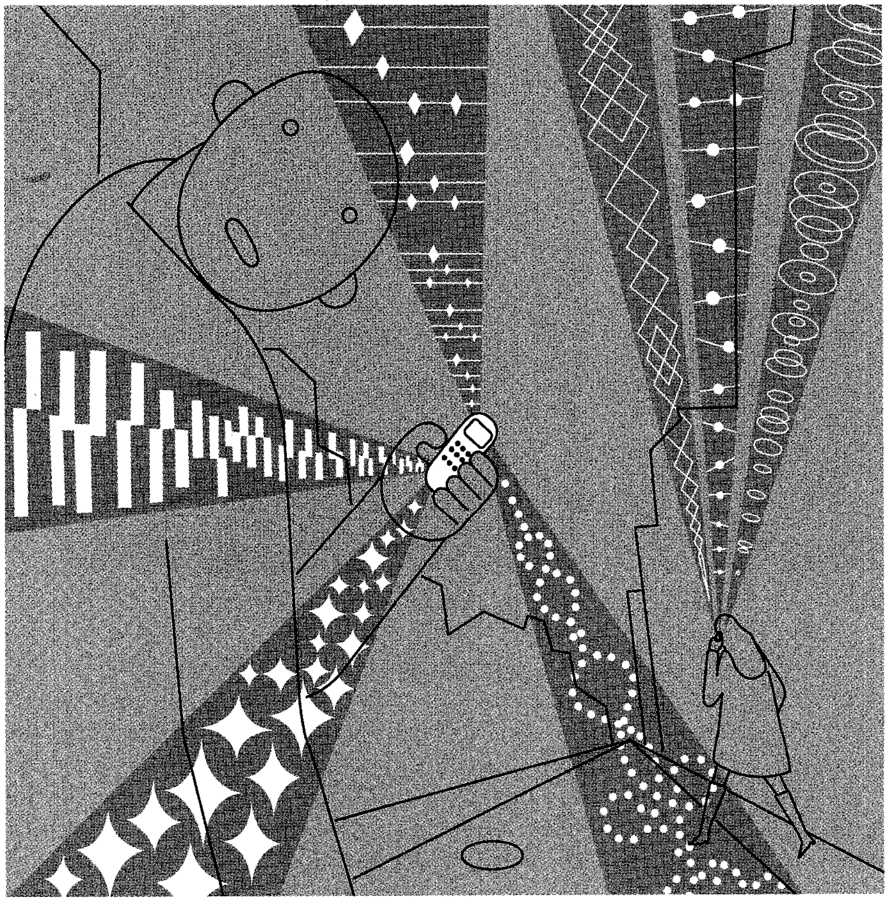
In 1997, your cell phone could make two kinds of sounds. It could "ring"—our anachronistic word for the electronic trill that phones produce when you receive a call—or it could play a single-line melody, like "Für Elise." If you've ever heard a cell phone bleep out Beethoven without the harmony, you'll understand that this wasn't much of a choice. At about this time, Nokia, the Finnish cell-phone company, introduced "smart messaging," a protocol that allowed people to send text messages to one another over their phones, and Vesa-Matti Paananen, a Finnish computer programmer, realized that it would work equally well for transmitting bits of songs. Paananen developed software called Harmonium that enabled people to program their cell phones to make musically complex sequences—melodies with rudimentary harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment—that they could forward to friends using smart messaging.

Those familiar with Linux, the freely available, open-source operating system developed by Linus Torvalds, another Finnish programmer, will not be shocked to learn that Paananen, in a nationally consistent fit of altruism, put Harmonium on the Internet for anyone to download, thus passing up a shot at becoming a billionaire. Companies called aggregators, which collect and distribute digital content, capitalized on Paananen's innovation, using his software to create what is today known as the polyphonic ringtone: a small packet of code that plays the phone as if it were a music box, producing a synthesized approximation of a song that often sounds less like the original it emulates than a gremlin making merry inside a video game. Recently, the polyphonic ringtone acquired a competitor. Called a master tone, or true tone, it is a compressed snippet of actual recorded song, and emanates from the cell-phone handset as if from a tiny radio.

Ringtones of either variety cost about two dollars and are typically no more than twenty-five seconds long. Nevertheless, according to Consect, a marketing and consulting firm in Manhattan, ringtones generated four billion dollars in sales around the world in 2004. The United States accounted for only three hundred million of these dollars, although Consect predicts that the figure will double this year. Fabrice Grinda, the C.E.O. of Zingy, a company in New York that sells ringtones and cell-phone games, told me that in parts of Asia ringtones now outsell some types of CDs. "In 2004, the Korean ringtone market was three hundred and fifty million dollars, while the CD market for singles was just two hundred and fifty million," Grinda said.

But America is catching up. Anyone who watches MTV has probably seen ads for a company called Jamster.com, which sells polyphonic ringtones as well as cruder, monophonic versions for older handsets. For a small fee (about six dollars a month), you can buy ringtones from Jamster by entering numerical codes on your phone's keypad. This method is popular in Europe and is generally faster than the standard American approach: using your phone's Web browser to scroll through pages of song titles. Most companies allow you to sample a tone before you buy it, but not all ringtones are compatible with all cell phones, so don't get too excited if your favorite band is offering ringtones on its Web site. The song snippets may work only on that old phone you gave away to your nephew.

Consect reports that fifty-six per



Ringtones are inherently pop: musical expression distilled to one representative hook.

RICHARD McGUIRE

cent of the ringtones bought in the United States during the first half of 2004 were hip-hop, and Mark Freiser, Consect's C.E.O., says that the vast majority of ringtone users are under the age of thirty. Teens like to assign different ringtones to different callers: something classical for Mom, an old hip-hop song for the roommate, a more recent track for the new boy in town. Since teens are fond of both hip-hop and cell phones, and have more friends than parents, it's no wonder that hip-hop ringtones rule. Of course, what's available to customers determines what they'll buy. Marketers in the mobile-media industry call these purchases "preferences." And they are right: ringtones, like the screen savers and plastic face plates that you can use to customize your phone, constitute a form of self-expression, though what you choose to tell the world about yourself is limited by a finite library of images and sounds.

A kid I met on the subway told me that his mother doesn't like his new 50 Cent ringtone, "Candy Shop," not because it features explicitly sexual rhymes but because it's not as cool as "In Da Club," a previous 50 Cent ringtone, which received *Billboard's* first Ringtone of the Year award, in 2004. A karate teacher in his thirties told me that he spends ten dollars a month on ringtones, and currently has about twenty, most of them polyphonic renditions of Led Zeppelin songs. An architect in her mid-thirties said, "I spent three days of productive work time listening to polyphonic ringtone versions of speed metal, trying to find exactly the ringtone that expressed my personality with enough irony and enough coolness that I could live with it going off ten times a day. In a quiet room, in a meeting, this phone's gonna go off—what are they going to hear?"

The ringtone also teaches us how songs work. Which clip best exemplifies a song? Did the ringtone's maker select the right bit? Do you even need to hear the singing? Perhaps the part of the song that arouses our lizard brain is the instrumental opening. It may be stranger and more sublime to hear a polyphonic impression of George Michael's voice than to listen to the real thing one more time. If a song can survive being transposed from live instruments to a cell-phone microchip, it must have musically hardy DNA. Many recent hip-hop songs make terrific ringtones because they already sound like ringtones. The polyphonic and master-tone versions of "Goodies," by Ciara, for example, are nearly identical. Ringtones, it turns out, are inherently pop: musical expression distilled to one urgent, representative hook. As ringtones become part of our environment, they could push pop music toward new levels of concision, repetition, and catchiness.

I spent more than a year sampling polyphonics, but felt stymied by the master tone, which has been trumpeted as superior because it is taken from the original recording. The first master tones I downloaded on my cell phone sounded terrible, like a transistor radio turned up to ten and stuffed inside a sock. I missed my primitive polyphonic tootles. When I finally upgraded to a newer phone, the master tones suddenly made sense. The sock was off and the radio was hi-fi. I felt the way I imagine someone who had a color TV in 1954 must have felt. I was hearing actual music, and I chose Kelis's "Milkshake" as my ringtone, guessing that the song might not be audible above the clangor of the streets but knowing that the alliance would be brief and that I'd soon be switching.

In the United States, master tones can be played only on phones available for the last year and a half, yet they already account for nearly fifty per cent of ringtone sales. Musical genres that suffered as polyphonics—sonically thick guitar rock, country, and jazz—can now challenge the hip-hop hegemony. Record labels, convinced that they have lost millions of dollars in CD sales to MP3 file-swapping, have been especially attentive to ringtones, and they love master tones. Polyphonic ringtones are essentially cover versions of songs: aggregators must pay royalties to the publisher, who then pays the songwriter. But master tones are compressed versions of original recordings, which means that record labels—the entities that typically own recordings—are entitled to collect a fee, too.

That fee can be considerable: record labels get twenty-five per cent of every master-tone sale (though they must pass along a portion of their take to the performer and the publisher). "It's an unbelievable mess," Les Watkins, the vice-president of Music Reports, Inc., a music-licensing and accounting firm, said. "A lot of these aggregator companies were very early players, essentially beholden to the major record labels and the music publishers to get the rights they needed. And, in this country, the music business is a very mature and consolidated business—somewhat collusive, in fact. The aggregators accepted rates and terms that they really didn't have to accept, and agreed to license the music in such a way that they're overpaying by a tremendous multiple."

This arrangement is unlikely to last. There are now Web-based companies, like Xingtone, for example, that will convert songs from your collection into master tones. Or you can do it yourself: some new cell-phone models can be connected to a computer by a data cable, allowing you to create master tones from MP3 files at home. However it is done, transferring music that you own to your phone is legal under copyright law.

Technically adept fans may thrill at the prospect of being able to make master tones for free. But the demise of the polyphonic will be a minor, and poignant, loss for music. The advent of film sound gave us the infinite blessing of composers like Ennio Morricone and Bernard Herrmann, but it took away the perfect trinity of the oncoming train, the imperilled heroine, and the trembling upper register of an upright piano. Next time you hear your favorite song playing in full verisimilitude from someone's pants, give a moment's thought to the lowly, twinkling polyphonic. Transitional stages of technology often have their own imperfect charms, memorable in ways that no one could have predicted. Polyphonic-ringtone nostalgia is approximately six months away. ♦

THE MYSTERIOUS EAST

From the Times.

For all its imaginative breadth, Mr. Cai's art is also grounded in history, or histories, including the history of gunpowder. By some accounts, the flammable substance was invented by the Chinese as a byproduct of an alchemical search for immorality.

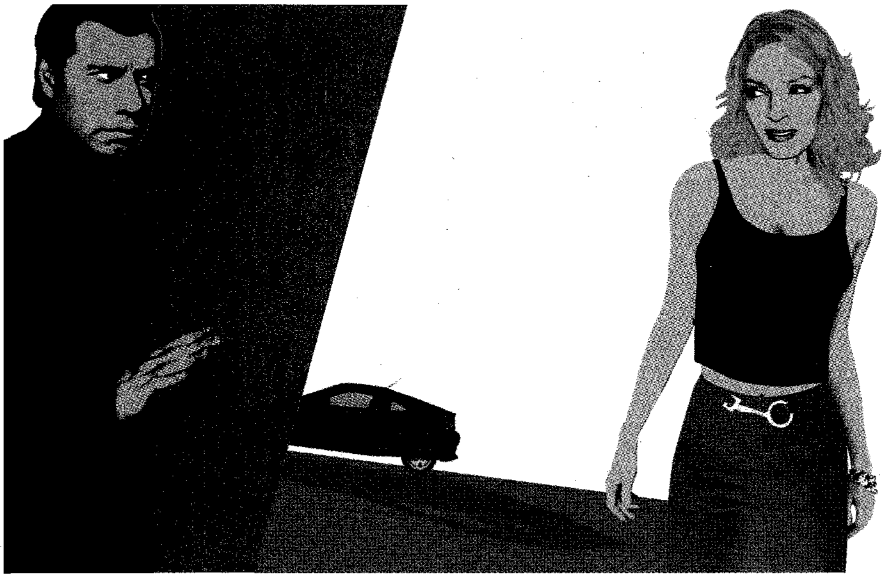
THE CURRENT CINEMA

DEVILMENT

"Be Cool," "Constantine."

BY DAVID DENBY

In "Be Cool," the sequel to the 1995 comedy "Get Shorty," Vince Vaughn's eyes come alive for the first time. Ever since Vaughn appeared in "Swingers," in 1996, he has been a slightly mysterious presence. In that movie, he was furiously self-mocking as Trent Walker, the fast-talking make-out artist who never gets a girl, but there was something unnerving about him: his eyes seemed a little remote, almost as if he were watching himself perform from someplace far away. After "Swingers," he played a variety of cynics, movers, and louses, sometimes seriously, sometimes for laughs. He quickly became the most untrustworthy man in movies since the fish-eyed young Bill Murray, twenty years earlier. Directors drew on his emotional reticence, but I wondered how long he could continue to withhold so much of himself. Was he warding off the intrusive tyranny of the camera? Impossible to say, but, in any case, Vaughn's not protecting himself anymore. In "Be Cool," he is gloriously animated as Raji, an insecure Los Angeles music-business manager. Rap is where the money is, and Raji, dressed in glowing reds, is so eager to flatter his clients that he can't stop thumping his chest and jackknifing his body and delivering himself of such locutions as "Stop hating, start participating. C'mon, twinkle, twinkle, baby." Dancing around a car in Santa Monica, Vaughn takes off into flights of rapturous absurdity. He seems incredibly happy to be playing this hyperanimated fool.



John Travolta and Uma Thurman in the sequel to "Get Shorty."

JOHN RITTER

Raji is not the only one posing in "Be Cool." Cedric the Entertainer is on hand as Sin LaSalle, a music producer who went to the Wharton School but has learned to roughen up his talk. Sin runs a rap group called the Dub-MDs, whose members show up in separate Hummers, pull huge revolvers out of their baggy shorts, point them at people, and scowl. Treating rappers as if they were no more authentic than Gilbert and Sullivan pirates may be an old joke, but it still works. If "Be Cool" has it right, thugged out is the only way to go in the music business. The movie sustains the satiric idea (though, unfortunately, very little of the style) of its illustrious predecessor. In "Get Shorty," based on a crackerjack Elmore Leonard novel of 1990, the suave, black-suited loan shark Chili Palmer (John Travolta) uses his skills at intimidation to negotiate the moral shallows of Hollywood. By staring people down ("Look at me. Are you looking? Look at me") and pitching, always pitching, Chili outwits a variety of gangsters, feds, actors, and producers—the movie doesn't recognize any differences among them—and turns himself into a kingpin. The hustler does so well because Hollywood is a community uniquely suited to being hustled. If someone claims he knows what he's talking about, who's to say he's wrong?

"Get Shorty," directed by Barry Sonnenfeld and written by Scott Frank, was one of the best movies of the mid-nineties—heartlessly funny, profane, and so decisive in its cynical wit that it achieved something close to the high style of a great thirties comedy. After the movie became a success, Leonard, in 1999, concocted "Be Cool," in which Chili, still dark-suited and commanding, decides, for a change of pace, to take on the music business. In the pastel offices of criminals and ex-criminals that are home to L.A. pop, he finds one example of purity—the ardent and talented young singer Linda Moon (Christina Milian). After hearing Linda in a club, Chili joins up with Edie Athens (Uma Thurman), who owns a failing record label, and together they try to wrest her away from her managers—Raji and his scruffy, heading-into-the-gutter partner, Nick Carr (Harvey Keitel). In the ensuing scramble, Linda's contract gets tossed around—even the Russian Mafia, operating out of a shabby pawnshop, gets into the act. "Be Cool," which was written by Peter Steinfeld and directed by F. Gary Gray ("The Italian Job"), is funny in spots, but Leonard's sardonic tone gets lost. The humor in "Get Shorty" was broad but not too broad, and, cynical as that movie was, it couldn't disguise its adoration of a corrupt milieu in which everyone wants to make a movie, be in a movie, live like a movie star. According to "Be Cool," however, the music business is about nothing but money; no one could love it in the same way that people love the movies. Linda Moon may be a sweet kid, and Chili and Edie certainly want her to succeed, but they want a big chunk of her, too, and the jokes turn rancid. The love has dropped out of the satire, and the comedy falls to clowning burlesque.

Considered as a sequel, "Be Cool" is not an insult, but it's a lazy, rhythmless, and redundant piece of moviemaking. The story of Linda becoming a star is of very little interest. We know she will make it, and the way she does so is more a business narrative than a heart-stopping series of breakthroughs. And Travolta and Thurman don't do much for each other. Watching Thurman, who ducks her head and makes eyes at Travolta and can't seem to find a character to play, I missed Rene Russo's insolent stare from "Get Shorty." This movie is soft and slack in all the places that "Get Shorty" was hard and direct. Gray holds scenes a beat or two too long (he leaves Cedric the Entertainer stranded a few times); and he flubs a reprise of the Travolta-Thurman dance sequence from "Pulp Fiction." The pair go to a club where the Black Eyed Peas are playing "Sexy," but when they hit the dance floor Gray doesn't shoot the bodies from top to bottom, as Quentin Tarantino did. He cuts from feet to shoulders, and then back again, and all you see is two cutoff halves moving together.

"Be Cool" is too slovenly to be cool. The movie is an expensive descendant of the miscellaneous, throw-everything-into-the-pot pictures that Hollywood made seventy years ago—jamborees like "The Big Broadcast of 1936," in which a barely functioning plot served as a clothesline for a variety of musical and comedy turns, some good, some terrible. "Be Cool" feels like a spangled tour of Los Angeles show business. As Chili and Edie pursue Linda's contract, they drop in on the Viper Room, and they visit the Lakers at the Staples Center, where they sit next to Steven Tyler, of Aerosmith, who has the frightening gauntness of a medieval hermit, and who is received as an eternal god graciously lingering on earth. Vince Vaughn keeps himself jacked up, and that pushes you through the movie, but there's a real oddity in most of his scenes: He is attended by The Rock, who plays a gay bodyguard desperate to be in movies. Preening and grinning, The Rock parodies himself ruthlessly, and I suppose it's unkind to point out that he isn't very good at it. The man born Dwayne Johnson, it turns out, doesn't even own his own performing name—"The Rock" belongs to World Wrestling Entertainment and Johnson has to license it for movie appearances. Now, that's a joke that Elmore Leonard might enjoy.

A Times Square audience sat in rapt silence the other week at a showing of the religio-satanic horror spectacle "Constantine." They were silent, perhaps, because all the characters in the movie were whispering. Baffling things happen in "Constantine." Lucifer's minions are "crossing over" to earth and taking possession of human bodies in preparation for the arrival of the Devil's son, who will institute chaos in the world. Our only defense: Constantine, played by a more streamlined than ever Keanu Reeves. A long time ago, Constantine attempted suicide but escaped the grip of Hell (he was dead for two minutes but revived), and now he owes God a favor or two. The Lord's servant performs exorcisms and sends the crossover devils back to their fiery home. As the apocalypse approaches, Reeves softly intones his fears to Rachel Weisz's Los Angeles cop, and she murmurs into his ear. The movie is reverently hushed even as all Hell is literally breaking loose. There is an extraordinary amount of digital mess and violence—gucky melting flesh and many revelations, transformations, and immersions, along with satanic rats and cockroaches. Since "Constantine" is based on a DC Comics/Vertigo graphic-novel series called "Hellblazer," I suppose I shouldn't be surprised by the feral jolts and shocks, but the theatre was filled with rapt adults as well as teen-agers. Which raises a touchy point. "Constantine" turns Catholic doctrine, ritual, and iconography into schlock. God's warrior wins, but is that enough to justify the tawdry, promiscuous borrowing? Will the trashy exploitation of Catholicism in movies ever end? Imagine a Jewish version of the spectacle—"Angel," starring Vin Diesel, in which God's messenger stays Abraham's hand in mid-sacrifice and then earns His approval by lowering himself into cursed pharaonic tombs with tied-together prayer shawls. In a Hindu version—"Vishnu," with Nicolas Cage—Shiva unleashes his snakes on the outskirts of Poughkeepsie and starts a war between truck drivers and apple pickers. Somehow, I think these projects might be shelved. Yet terrible movies like "The Exorcist" and "The Passion of the Christ" and "Constantine" get made and become enormously popular. I will leave the issue of blasphemy to experts. But maybe some of the audience should wonder if they aren't performing the Devil's work by sitting so quietly through movies that turn wonders into garbage. ♦

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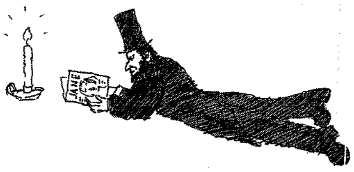
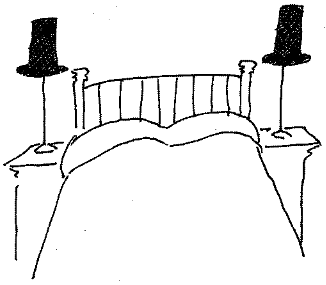
THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL RUDNICK

FURTHER PROOF THAT LINCOLN WAS GAY

The first draft of the Gettysburg Address began, "Four score and seven years ago-ish . . ."

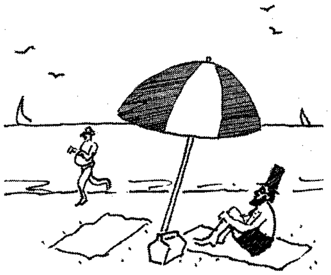




When Lincoln was a boy, he would walk twenty miles through the snow every morning to buy magazines.

Lincoln was raised in a log cabin with a dirt floor, which he vacuumed.

Lincoln liked to say, "All men are created equal, except at the beach."



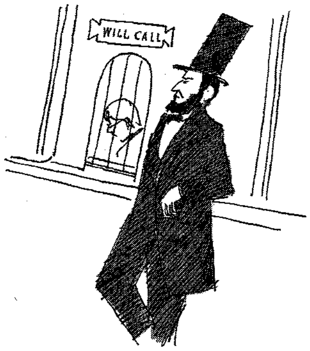
Lincoln's greatest regret was the movie version of "Phantom."

Lincoln named his horse Mister Horse.

Lincoln wanted to call it "The Emancipation Proclamation—The New Sensation!"

Lincoln urged Congress to bind the nation's wounds "with malice toward none, with charity for all," although under his breath he murmured, "except for a certain red-headed lieutenant, and he knows why."

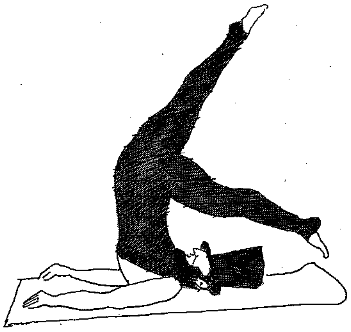
As a young country lawyer, Lincoln often bartered his services for house seats.



For more than four years during his twenties, Lincoln shared a bed with his friend Joshua Fry Speed. It is now believed that he loved Joshua Fry Speed for his winning personality, and not because his name sounds like a George Foreman product.

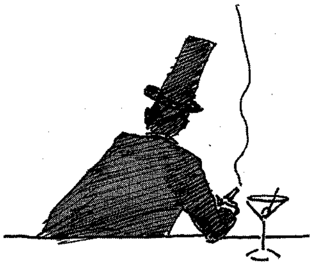
The friendship finally ended when Speed told Lincoln, "You're not the President of me!"

Another friend, Billy Greene, said that Lincoln's thighs were "as perfect as a human being's could be." Lincoln was said to have responded, "It's called Pilates."



Lincoln was known as the Rail-Splitter. Few people realize that this was a cocktail.

When Lincoln was told that Lee had surrendered, he gasped and exclaimed, "Oh no she didn't!"

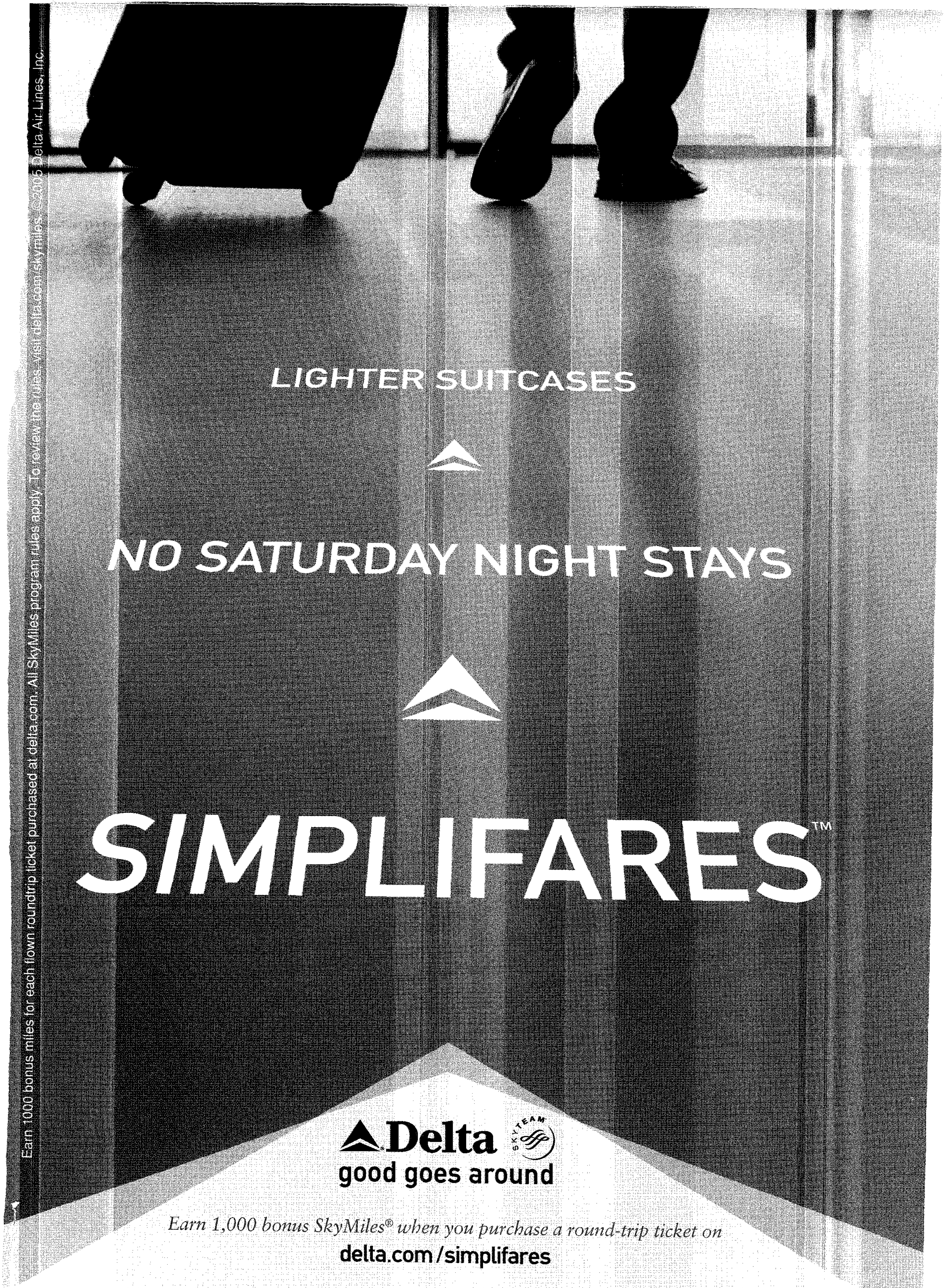


Just before his first inauguration, he told Mary Todd Lincoln to go home and take one thing off.

Lincoln grew his beard because he thought it looked hot on Ethan Hawke.

Upon entering Ford's Theatre on that fateful night, Lincoln whispered to his wife, "I hear it's slow."

MICHAEL CRAWFORD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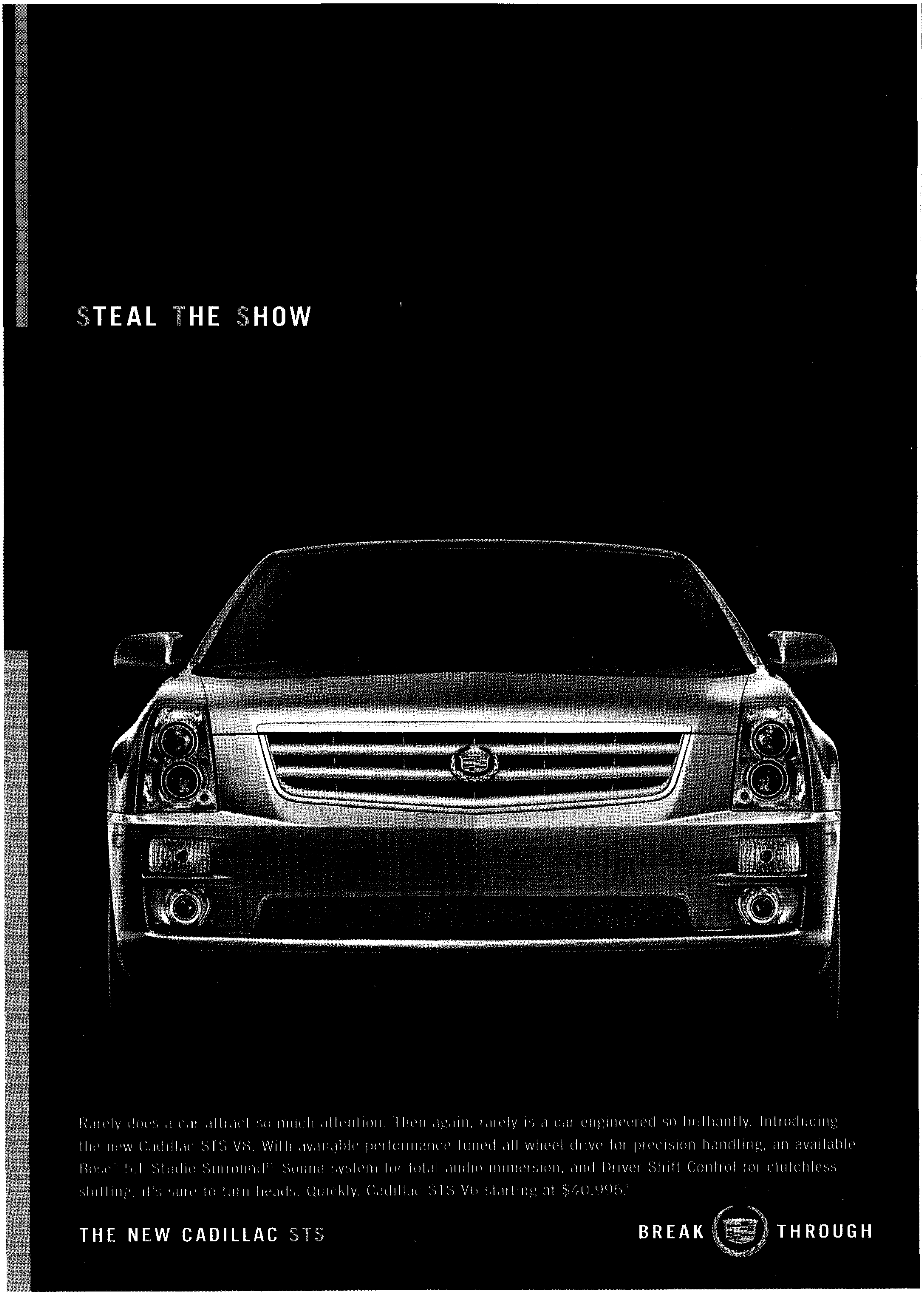

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